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Death Beliefs From Indiana

By Violetta Maloney Halpert

This article presents the folk beliefs about death which have been extracted from a collection of folklore made in 1940-1941 by eight freshman English classes at Indiana University. Although their instructor, Herbert Halpert, had given his students a brief introduction to folklore and advice on collecting, the material they submitted in their compositions has its drawbacks as evidence for a scientific appraisal. These are fairly obvious: tantalizing omissions, for lack of asking the right question at the right time; insufficient background detail; little explanatory comment on the function of the items; and the fuzziness, repetition and bad grammar that paralyse so much freshman writing. In spite of such weaknesses, the collection has material that is valuable. The death beliefs in particular are notable in quantity and variety.[1]

Since the students were not trained collectors and did most of their investigating during a brief holiday, the items appearing here, with a few exceptions, can be assumed to be those easily available to casual inquiry, the most common property. The beliefs included in this article were all reported within the state of Indiana. They came from city and country, old and young, "natives" and recent arrivals. They have much in common with published death beliefs from Illinois and Iowa.

The majority of death beliefs can be classified as either omens or taboos. Death omens, which informants often call "signs" or "tokens," are simply notices of impending death. They are usually manifestations of the external world, although there are occasional exceptions by way of extra-sensory perceptions. Death taboos are warnings against committing actions which are, or were once, believed to cause death. From the evidence of this collection, the death taboos seem to inspire less intensity of belief and testimony than the omens. Perhaps this is partly because, in the case of the taboo, man is in control of the outcome; whereas in the case of the omen he is helpless in the face of an impersonal or supernatural happening over which he has no initial control. His only possible resort is a charm to take the curse off the omen. No such charms were reported by this group of Indiana students. This does not necessarily mean that they were unknown to

[1] Other materials from this collection, which is part of the Murray State College Folklore Archive, Murray, Kentucky, have been published by Herbert Halpert in *HFB* 1: 3-34, 85-97; 2: 9-10 (folktales and legends); and by Violetta Halpert in *HF* 8: 37-43; 9: 1-12 (folk cures).

their informants but does imply that they are not an important part of the corpus of belief in Indiana.

The death taboos can be easily distinguished from the omens because of the extent to which they conform to a pattern. With some inevitable exceptions and slight variations, the death taboos in this collection are phrased in one of two ways: (1) if you do so-and-so, someone will die; (2) never (variants: don't, you shouldn't) do such-and-such, or someone will die.[2] The distinctive items of the pattern are the action verb and the pronoun subject. The omens in this collection show no comparable homogeneity of form, although many of them follow the general formula suggested by Puckett for all omens: "If something (outside of your control) behaves in such and such a manner, so and so will result."[3]

Although there is much that might be said concerning the difference in function between death omens and death taboos, there are so many borderline cases (e.g., thirteen at table) that speculation on the basis of one small collection would be unwise. One basic distinction, however, seems to be fairly well substantiated by informants' comments. Taboos can be, and are, used as negative controls (Puckett's term) in teaching cultural behavior; for example, "If you take flowers from a graveyard, you will take someone in your family back to the graveyard." Omens, by their very nature, cannot have this sort of social function, but they can be of great use to the individuals who believe in them. The death omen, although often a shock in itself, seems to provide control or support against the much greater shock of death itself and to provide emotional fortification against the insupportable fear of the unknown.

DEATH OMENS

The death omen in Indiana seems to be most often some aspect of animal or bird behavior. Another very large group of omens depends on the behavior of inanimate objects. Incidents at the time of death often predict other deaths, and death itself is widely believed to be a sign of other deaths to follow. Aural phenomena, such as knocking and ringing, are believed by many people to be death omens, as are certain involuntary human actions like sneezing. And finally, there are the ominous dreams that warn of impending death.

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[2] It was deflating but gratifying to find that Newbell N. Puckett anticipated this observation by some years in his *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro*, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1926, p. 393. I am sure that analysis of other collections of material would further corroborate the formula.

[3] Ibid., p. 313.

The sign of death most frequently reported in this collection is a howling animal, usually a dog. Of the forty-five students who submitted this belief, nine of them have the simple statement, "If you hear a dog howling it is a sign of death." The other reports have additions and modifications. In Lawrence County during the period of 1925-1940, the howling dog indicated that someone in its particular neighborhood was going to die. In New Albany and Goshen the howling dog meant death only if the dog were under a window at the time, and in Worthington about 1890 the dog had to be howling at the door to signify imminent death. A woman from Vincennes said that the more a dog howled, the closer the relative who would die. Some people believe that the dog must howl a certain length of time, or number of times, or in a certain direction, to foretell death. "My grandmother," wrote a collector from Adams County, "said that she heard their dog howl three times just a little while before one of the children of the family died." A family known to another student had been assured of the recovery of their daughter from an operation, but she unexpectedly suffered a relapse and died. Their hound had been howling for two days, and "howled until the very hour of her death."

This detailed description came from a LaPorte County student: "I had heard that when a dog stands in the road and howls, someone in the vicinity is going to die. I don't believe this but I know of two instances where it seems true. A dog howled toward the north. Two days later, a man who lives less than half a mile from us committed suicide. In the fall of the same year, a dog howled toward the south. That day a neighbor died."

A number of informants believe or have heard that it is only a dog howling at night (variant, midnight) that is "a sure sign of death." In Crawford County it is believed that if a dog howls on a night following a death there will be another death in the same family. Still other variants of this belief indicate that the dog must howl at or by the light of the moon; in such a case, one informant says, the death will be in the immediate family.

Other howling animals as prophets of death are distinctly in the minority in this collection. There is one report from Terre Haute that if a horse neighs "peculiarly" a death will occur in the neighborhood within three days. In Monroe County about 1860-1870 it was believed that if a cat howls around a house at night death is coming there.

Birds as death omens fall into one of four categories which can be labeled: (a) noisy birds—the counterparts of howling animals; (b) birds at a window; (c) birds in the house; (d) birds flying against the wind. The owl takes precedence among the noisy birds as the

harbinger of death. The whippoorwill and the rooster tie for second place; and the turtle dove figures in two reports. (The owl, the whippoorwill and the dove also are prominent among the named birds in the other three categories above.) Of the informants who believed that hearing a whippoorwill was a sign of death, two out of three said it meant death in the family. In one case (Dugger) the omen was hearing it in the daytime. Another report showed the belief in operation: "There was a married couple from B---- who moved out west, and on their first night they heard a whippoorwill. They never lived there very long; they came back to B----. They would move back home rather than stay there and take a chance on dying." A rooster is believed to be an omen of death if it crows three times before breakfast (Hope), or if it crows at night (Bloomington).

A number of informants said that a bird sitting at or flying against a window foretells death. In one case (Terre Haute) it meant death in the family; in another (South Bend) death to the persons sitting in the room. Of the named birds in this category two were doves, one a red bird, one a black crow. Several "proofs" of this omen were offered. One student wrote: "My grandmother was a very well educated woman. On a cold March Sunday three years ago she was put to bed with a sore throat. Outside her window a beautiful red bird perched and sang. Frantically she begged that the horrid bird be frightened away; it was a sign of death. On the following Tuesday she died, as the bird had predicted."

One informant was driving, with her son, to a hospital to see her husband, who was seriously ill. "Suddenly a dove hit the windshield of the car and the boy turned to his mother and said, 'Dad's gone.'" It was ten-thirty by the mother's watch. When they reached the hospital about eleven o'clock they found that Mr. E--- had died about half an hour before their arrival.

A student from LaPorte County who reported it a sign of death to see a bird trying to get into a house at a window at night added, "I know an old German fellow who really believes this. One night about 12:30 there was a loud pounding. My mother opened the door and there stood Mr. D----, shaking and weeping. He told Mom what he had seen [i.e., a bird at the window] and begged to be allowed to stay for the rest of the night. His assumption that he was going to die turned out to be wrong and he is still alive."

There are many reports in which a bird (variants: "any wild bird," a whippoorwill, a white dove, a sparrow, a bat)) flying into or through a house is considered an omen of death. In most cases it is believed to mean death in the immediate family. Aside from its fre-

quency in the collection, this belief merits attention because of the number of "proofs" attesting it. "I did not believe this until about a year ago," wrote a student from Shoals. "The house was open one summer evening and a sparrow flew in and perched on the telephone. In less than three hours the phone rang and it was my cousin saying that my uncle had died." This is the usual commentary in a nutshell, and it is a strong indication of one way in which traditional beliefs are perpetuated in this doubting generation.

Two items concerning a white dove are of more than routine interest. In one of them a person is considered near death when a white dove enters his room by a window; but the death can be postponed by capturing the dove and keeping it alive. As soon as the dove dies or escapes the person will die soon after.

The following story is summarized from the report of a student from Putnam County. Mrs. M - - -, lying ill in her bedroom, called her sons to catch a bird which had blown into the room. As Jim, the youngest, entered the room the bird flew out the window. Jim saw that it was a white dove, which meant nothing to him at the time. When Mr. M - - - was told of the bird incident that evening he turned pale and told the boys to stay near their mother during the next few days. Not taking their father seriously, the boys went out the next day. When they returned they saw their friends gathered around the house and were told that their mother had committed suicide in the nearby canal. "When Mrs. M - - -'s body was removed from the canal, a white dove was struggling to release itself from Mrs. M - - -'s hair. As the body was lifted from the water the dove escaped."

In general, the flight of birds is not regarded as ominous, but one informant from Dugger believed that an owl flying across the moon is a death sign, and two others said that birds flying against the wind foretell death. One of the latter two, a student from Indianapolis, offered the following explanation: "While with my grandmother in the fields of our farm one day, I saw a crow trying to fly against a stiff wind. When I looked again I saw that the bird was making absolutely no headway." (The grandmother remarked that this was an omen of death.) "Her interpretation of this sign was that the wind was the current of death and the bird a living person. Since the person had been unable to overcome the current of death, he would soon be swept from life into death."

This collection includes only a few death omens involving living creatures other than those mentioned above. Each of those following appears only once. When a dog lies on its back with its feet in the air, someone is going to die (Lawrence County); if a kitten walks

across the piano keys there will be a death in the house (Indianapolis). Seeing a white horse on Friday the thirteenth of any month means that a member of the family will die in the coming year (Fort Wayne). Such diverse things as a white moth in the house (Indianapolis) and a school of sharks following a ship (Terre Haute) are considered signs of death. If a snake sees your teeth, someone in the family is sure to die (Dugger). And "a spider on the bed means death ahead" to a Gary informant.

Death signs are frequently read in the behavior of inanimate objects. In this collection the bulk of these reports concern falling stars, falling pictures, breaking glass, and clocks that strike and/or stop. An old man from Bloomington said, "They always told us when we was kids that every time a star fell, why that was a sign that somebody died that instant. I reckon it was true cause somebody's always a-dyin' anyhow, you know." This belief seems to be widely held in Indiana. Seven of the fourteen informants who knew it specified in some way "*See* a star fall, it is a sign of death." Unlike many of the foregoing omens, this one does not usually imply death in the immediate family.

A picture falling off the wall means death, according to some eight or nine informants. One collector from Gary wrote, "My mother believes this . . . because one night one of our pictures fell down and two days later she received word her father was very ill. He died a couple of days later." A Crawford County family believes that if a picture slides down the wall without breaking the cord that holds it, or pulling the nail out, a member of the family will die. "It has worked three times for them. The first time a picture fell and the next day a son was shot and killed."

Four informants said that a clock ticking or striking after having been silent for a long time foretells death. One from Bedford believed that if a clock stops, someone dies the hour it stops. A student from Dillsboro commented, "My grandmother's grandmother and grandfather had a little gold clock that stood on the mantel. It had not run for five or six years, but on the night her nephew died it started ticking and ran for a few hours, then stopped on the hour that he died."

Several persons believed that broken glass is a sign of death. Breaking a mirror was said by a Cook County informant to herald death because of the destruction of the human image. A student from Indianapolis was told that to receive a photograph with a broken glass over it is a sure sign that the original of the picture or one of his family will die before the end of the year. One collector (Dillsboro) says that if a lamp chimney breaks, it is a sign of death in the family.

If it breaks near the bottom the death will be soon; the farther up the break is, the longer the person has to live. This report adds, "You can see someone is bound to die before long, so this one 'works'. . . . There are several people who can point out instances where this break caused death—they really believe it."

Other happenings involving inanimate objects are reported as death omens, but not frequently enough to establish themselves as of major importance in this collection. It is considered a sign of death if an ambulance stops in front of your door, if feathers form a wreath in your pillow, if a knife falls accidentally and sticks up in the floor or ground, if an empty chair rocks, and if a vigil candle blows out. And should one of the flowers on a lady's hat fall off, there will be a death in her family in the near future. The collector of this belief adds that it is still current in Greenfield, even though the hats which gave rise to it (vintage of 1920) are now very scarce. One informant believed that the ace of spades means death to the person who draws it.

Various incidents at the time of death, or during a funeral, are said to predict another death. For instance, if a corpse is warm the day following death, another relative will die (Gary). If a hearse stops in the lane on the way from a funeral, another death will occur in the house (Bluffton). Should a funeral car break down on the way to the graveyard, there will be three deaths within a year in the family of the deceased (Indianapolis). Three informants believed that if it rained in a new or open grave, or during a funeral, there would be a death in the family within the next year. "About eight years ago," writes one collector, "a man in this [Bartholomew] county died, and on the day of the funeral it rained very hard. Several of the older people said that since it had rained during the funeral it was a sign of death in the family within the next year. This man died in January and during the following August his son died." Obviously rain at a funeral is considered ominous for the survivors, but "happy is the corpse that the rain rains on." According to a Lawrence County informant, it is believed to rest easily in the grave, and go to heaven.

Apart from rain during a funeral, aspects of the weather do not occur in this collection as omens of death except in rather general fashion, as in the beliefs that "dark, cloudy, windy weather means that somewhere there is death," and "a green Christmas means a full graveyard." (Gary and Logansport.)

A number of beliefs involving aural phenomena as omens of death were reported. A ringing in one's ears is a sign someone is dying; in one case, someone you know. A variant statement says "a ticking in the ear means a death of a close friend or relative." One

Indianapolis informant gloomily remarks, "If your ear rings in a tolling fashion, *you* will die." [Italics mine.] The only case history offered in connection with aural signs follows: "My aunt claims that three times in her life she has been startled in the night by what she calls death bells ringing in her ears. Each time some member of her family has died within a week. She believes that these death bells are a warning to her, and she has become quite superstitious about them." (West Lebanon.) A report from Dillsboro says that it is a sign of death to hear someone calling in the night.

In another case the omen reported was heavenly music, audible only to the person who was about to die. A student from Green County wrote: "When my cousin died in L - - - - Hospital about two years ago, my great aunt was sitting by her bedside. V - - - said to my aunt, 'Isn't that beautiful music?' My aunt said, 'Why honey, I don't hear any music.' And V - - - - said, 'Well, there is; it sounds like angels out there in the hall singing.' In a very short time she died. I do not believe any of these . . . sayings, although many of these things appear to be true. I have heard the token about the angels singing just before a death several times. I may be wrong, but I am inclined to think it is their [i.e., the informants'] imaginations."

A student informant from Dugger tells of an incident in which the sound that meant death was audible to someone besides the dying person. A woman was sitting beside the death bed of her uncle, who had been a soldier. "They heard a bugle call and he sat up and said 'They're calling me.' A few minutes later he was dead."

Under aural signs come also the various knockings, rappings, and loud unexplained sounds that are believed to herald death. Several informants agreed that to hear a knock at the door and find no one there meant that someone in the family (or a good friend) would die. One man from Gary added, "Supposedly it was Death knocking at the door." In Dillsboro, the number of knocks heard was believed to tell how long the doomed person had to live; five knocks meant five hours, days, months, or years—depending on the interpretation.

In several instances, the informants believed that the knocking or rapping (variously on the door, wall, window, bed) had to come in three's to foretell death. A Crawfordsville informant said she "knew a woman who heard three knocks on her bed one night; she got out of bed and telephoned all her friends, only to find out that her father had died."

An elderly woman in Mitchell told one student, "Thirty-five or forty years ago when all my children were small I was getting ready to go to my mother's to wash clothes. As I went out the door, I heard

three loud claps which almost knocked me down. I knew that was something warning me that I was going to have some kind of misfortune. I was afraid to go to my mother's, but my husband laughed and took me anyway. Two days afterwards one of my children suddenly took sick and died." Further evidence of belief in an unexplained loud noise as a death omen comes from Green County. This collector writes, "My friend's mother was in the hospital. His father, brothers, grandmother and himself were sitting around the table eating supper when they heard a terrible loud sound in front of their house. It sounded like a tree had blown over on the house. It was a dark night, very windy. They jumped up and ran to see what it was. When they looked out they could not see a thing wrong. In a short time they received word that the mother was dead. My friend naturally believed in that token."

There is one account, from Harrison County, of an apparition as an omen of death. The informant's grandfather saw "a hearse, drawn by horses, circle around his bed . . . . They would start at the head and continue all the way around, making three trips before leaving. As he lay awake, wondering what it meant, the hearse appeared again . . . and made three trips . . . . Later my grandfather asked his friends what this could mean. One said it meant death for someone in the family within three days. My grandfather's father died suddenly on the third day from the time he had seen the apparition." In one collector's family in Gary it was believed that a red light would circle around you before a relative died.

Several persons reported as death omens some involuntary behavior on the part of human beings. One student's grandmother believed that if a sick person picked at a cover it was a sure sign of death. Another student had heard that it is a sign of death "if your left eye jumps." One informant said, "If you sneeze three times on Sunday morning before breakfast there will be a death in the family soon." A woman from Oaktown believed that this omen was even more deadly, saying, "Count the number of times that you sneeze before breakfast on Sunday morning, for you will hear of that many deaths during the week."

It is interesting to find that the moon, which is of major importance in other categories of folk belief such as weather and planting signs, is mentioned as a death omen only three times in this group of reports. A Kokomo student's grandmother believed that if you see the moon through your window when you go to bed there will be a death in the family. A red moon is thought to mean death in the community within a few days; "blood on the moon" means murder.

Death itself is often believed to be an omen of other deaths, and "three deaths in a row" is a common belief. "When a person dies or is born in a county," said an informant from Bloomfield, "two more will either die or be born, as the case may be . . . . They are born and die by three's." Three people, says another informant from Gary, must die before the evil spell is broken. Several reports say specifically that if one person dies, two more in that neighborhood, or in that family will die, and usually soon afterward. An undertaker in Putnam County "confirmed" the superstition that deaths come in groups of three. "His records," the collector writes, "reveal that the sequence of funeral dates for a period of a month will typically run as follows: March 2, 4, 7; March 18, 19, 22; March 28, 30, April 1. With such evidence upholding this belief, it is naturally very active in R - - - - ."

Many kinds of dreams are considered warnings of imminent death, almost always within the family. Twelve informants believed that to dream of a wedding or marriage is a sign of death. Five reported that dreaming of death or the dead or something funereal foretells another death. Two said that dreaming of birth is a sign of death. In Spencer it was believed that if one dreams of a dead person and living person in the same dream, the dead person is coming for the living. An informant from Haubstadt said that if you dream of a graveyard in any connection there will be a sudden death soon in your family. In South Bend an informant believed that to dream of a casket signifies that death will come to someone well-known to the dreamer.

Seven informants believed that to dream of muddy or dirty water (variants: mire, an open well) means that death will come to someone near to the dreamer. A Starke County collector writes, "In a certain family there were three deaths in one year, and before each death the mother, aunt of the woman who told me the story, dreamed that she was wading around in mire and that she couldn't escape. It happened down at Germantown, Illinois, some thirty years ago."

The mother of an informant from Crawfordsville told him this belief, which came to her from her grandmother: "if you dream of a dog and can remember what it looked like when you awaken, there will be a death in the family." Two informants, from Terre Haute and Gary, reported that dreaming of snakes means death; in one case in the family, in the other to a dear friend. The second informant had a story from a fraternity brother whose mother believed in this sign of death. "One night she dreamed that a very dear friend of hers was being chased by a snake. The next day she told her son about the unfortunate dream. He, of course, not believing in superstitions, was not

alarmed by his mother's fanciful tale. A few days later the person whom she had dreamed of became seriously ill with a streptococcus infection. The illness proved to be fatal, and the dream came true. This little incident proved that although some people do not believe in superstitions they sometimes 'pan' out."

Another report which also has an interesting comment by the student collector is this story. "She [a Bloomington informant] has a cousin living in Kentucky who truly believes that dreaming of a black horse is a sign of certain death in the family. She said that each time there has been a death in the family she has dreamed of a black horse. Two weeks before her husband died she had such a dream. A year later she dreamed the same thing and cautioned her son. A short time later he was killed. The peculiarity about it is that this belief was not handed down in the family, but it's from her own experience that she believes this."

There is great variety in the list of dreams that can foretell death. An old lady from St. Joe County told a student that when one dreams of his teeth falling out, someone is going to die. A collector from Gosport was told by her great-grandmother that if you dream of a person gathering white flowers that person will die. A Shelbyville woman informant believed that if you dream of a snow-white washing on a line someone in that house will die. A seventy-five year old grandmother told one student from Angola that a dream of rain means there will be a death in the family. A woman from Fulton County believed "if you dream of falling, and your dream follows the fall until you hit the ground, it is a sign of death." From Gary comes the belief that to dream of a wall falling out means death in the family. The collector notes, "The informant says that this dream has never failed for her. The first time she had this dream her father died the next day. Again in two months she had the fateful dream . . . Also a red light circled around the wall as it fell. The next day a telegram arrived saying that her brother had died in an explosion. She says she believes that the red light foretold the type of death of her brother."

DEATH TABOOS

1. If three people light their cigarettes from one match,
   the third smoker will die (2)[4]
   the youngest of the three will die first
   one of them will soon die (2)
   one of them will die before the year is out

[4] Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of times the particular variant occurs in the collection.

one of them will die in 24 hours.

Several of these reports trace this belief to World War I. One collector wrote, "It was found that if one match was held long enough to light three cigarettes, the enemy could sight the persons and shoot them. Thus, the belief that death comes to the one whose cigarette is lit last."

2. If there are thirteen at a table,
   it will cause a death
   one will die within the year (4)
   it means death for one of them (4)

   A student collector from Greene County wrote: "I attended a family reunion on Thanksgiving Day, 1938. We had just started to sit down at the table when one of my aunts, whom none of the family had seen for several years, suddenly remarked, "I won't eat at this table." When asked why, she said that there were thirteen places set and if we all sat down and ate something would strike one of us . . . . We finally talked her into eating with us. Shortly after this my grandfather died, and to this day my aunt says that the reason he died was because thirteen people ate at the same table at the same time."
3. If two people sweep the floor together, one of the brooms must be thrown away or one of the people will die. (Greene County)
4. If two people make a bed at the same time, a member of the family will die.

   The collector, from West Lebanon, says this has been believed through generations of her family. "Every time my cousin and I start to make a bed together we are always stopped by my mother or someone else in the family."
5. If you miss two consecutive rows while planting corn, someone in your family will die before the end of the year.

   The collector had this from "a descendant of the originator of the superstition, from Monroe Co." and describes the origin as follows: "One day after Mr. H - - - had planted his corn, he found that he had missed two consecutive rows. That year one of his small sons died. The next year he again missed two rows of corn in planting, and another son died. For some unknown reason he concluded that his missing the rows of corn was the reason for his sons' deaths. Since that time all of his descendants check carefully to see that no corn is missed in planting."

   This same belief, involving "leaving one row vacant when planting crops," is reported by another student from his grandmother, also from Bloomington.
6. Never hang clothes up on a line outside (variant: never wash

clothes) between Christmas and New Year's Day. (Dugger) The student collector comments, "One year this grandmother broke the rule and her father died within a few days." The report from Newton County carries this comment: "My mother said one Christmas Day quite a few years ago she took some dirty clothes to her mother's house for her to wash but she wouldn't wash them until after New Year's . . . . It was a sign of death."

7. If a comb is dropped on Sunday, it means a certain death in the following week. (Delphi)
8. If you start making a dress (variant: garment) on Friday,
   and don't get it done that day, you will never live to finish the dress
   it must be completed before Sunday or the person for whom it is intended will die (2)
   you will never live to wear it out.
9. If you comb your hair after sundown you will die within a year's time. (Nashville)
10. If crumbs are swept out the back door at night there will be a death in the family. (Greenfield)
11. If you rub your hands after you have eaten, it means there will be a death within the family. (Bloomington)
12. Never sweep or dust under a sick person's bed or the patient will die. (2—Oaktown; Indianapolis).
13. If you cut a door in the house, one of the family will die before they move from the house. (Oaktown, Knox Co.)
14. If someone opens an umbrella in the house,
    there will be a death (8)
    there will be a death in the family (2)
    there will be death in the family within a week.

    A collector from Terre Haute writes that he walked into his aunt's house one rainy day with his umbrella open. "When she saw me she nearly went into a convulsion . . . she said that someone in the family would die within a week. She lived in misery all week. In fact, I became worried myself. When the week ended and not a single member of the family was dead, I was certainly relieved. But my aunt will remind me to this day never to open an umbrella in the house or it will cause a death in the family."
15. If a sharp or edged object is carried into or through the house it will cause a death (12).

    Of the twelve reports, the objects involved, and the particular results, are as follows: spade (2); hoe or rake (4) means death

in the family; shovel (3) means death in the family; ax (2) means death to one of the family, and also murder; edged tool (1) means one of the family will die a violent death. Much more personal than most is the belief from Dillsboro: "If someone carries a shovel through the house, he will dig your grave."

16. If you rock a rocking chair when no one is sitting in it,
    it will cause death to someone in the house
    it will cause death in the family (2).
    The most specific expression of this taboo is from Carroll County: "You should not sit in one rocking chair and rock another with your foot."
17. If you turn a chair around on one leg,
    the youngest in the family will die within a year
    it means a death in the family.
18. If you let a child see itself in a mirror before it's a year old,
    it will die (4)
    it will die young.
19. If you step across a baby (variant: person) lying on the floor and do not step back across, the baby will die within a year. (Worthington; Bloomington)
20. If you blow out all the candles on a birthday cake but one, let some other person blow it out. If you blow it, there will be death in the family within three months. (Hope).
21. Never wear an opal unless it is your birthstone. It brings death. (Indianapolis)
22. If you kill a turtle dove, someone in your family will die. (Lawrence Co.)
23. If you trade chickens, a member of the family will die within the year. (Oaktown, Knox Co.)
    The informant and another lady traded chickens and within the year a member died in each family.
24. If you touch a dead person, someone in your family will die soon.
25. If anyone sees himself in the mirror between the death and burial of a relative, it means another death in the family.
    This is negatively reported from Chesterton: "Never look into a mirror when someone in the family has died, or you will be the next to die."
26. If you get a new garment to wear to a funeral, you will be wearing the same garment when some of your own folks die. (Greene Co.)
27. If a person counts the number of cars in a funeral, a member of his family will die. (Goshen)

The collector heard this from an older sister, and says, "It seems now that every time I see a funeral I think of this and do not attempt to count the cars for fear there may be some truth in what my sister told me." A variant form of this taboo known in Chesterton is: "Never count the cars in a funeral procession because the number of cars are the number of years that you have left to life."

28. If you take flowers from a graveyard, you will take someone in your family back to the graveyard. (Indianapolis.)

Murray, Kentucky

*The Deck of Cards or the Soldier's Bible**

By DAVID S. MCINTOSH

When I see the ace I am reminded of the one God who rules heaven and earth.

When I see the deuce, I'm reminded of the two parts of the Bible, the Old Testament and the New Testament.

When I see the trey I'm reminded of the Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

When I see the four spot I'm reminded of the four prophets, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

When I see the five spot, I'm reminded of the five wise virgins who took oil for their lamps and the five foolish ones that took no oil.

When I see the six spot, I'm reminded of the six days in which God made heaven and earth.

When I see the seven, God made the earth in six days and rested on the seventh day.

When I see the eight spot, I'm reminded of Noah and his family who boarded the ark before the flood.

When I see the nine, I'm reminded of the nine lepers that went to the pool of Siloam and were healed.

When I see the ten, I'm reminded of the ten commandments handed down to Moses on Mount Sinai.

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* Professor McIntosh sent this to *Midwest Folklore* so that it might be compared with Alexander Scheiber's "A Hungarian Encyclopedia of Cards" which appeared in Volume II, No. 2, pp. 93-100 of *Midwest Folklore*. It should be noted, too, that this has definite relationships with "Green Grow the Rushes" and "The Seven Joys of Mary" not to mention many other counting songs.—W. E. R.

When I see the King, I'm reminded of the King of Glory that has promised to come again and redeem the world.
When I see the Queen, I'm reminded of Mother of Jesus, Mary.
When I see the Jack, I'm reminded to shun the devil and all his works.
This is my Bible calendar.
There are fifty-two weeks in a year.
There are fifty-two cards in a deck.
There are twelve tricks in a deck.
There are twelve months in a year.
The one extra card, the jack represents the devil and his works and reminds us that he should always be shunned.

This material was obtained from Rosa Belle Bonds, a student at Southern Illinois University during the Summer of 1952. Mrs. Bonds said that she learned it from her father who was a negro minister in Southern Illinois for many years.

Southern Illinois University *Carbondale, Illinois*

Folk Life Research in Norway

By MAG. ART. BRITA GJERDALEN SKRE

Folk life research in Norway dates from the 17th and 18th century when the country was in a union with Denmark. Our officials were partly Danes, partly Norwegians with a Danish education. These officials founded our folk life research by writing about the customs, dialects, and trade, etc., of their local districts. For the Danish officials this work was a means by which they learned to know a foreign country. In the minds of Norwegian officials, however, there was a feeling of patriotism mingled with their desire to investigate.

This patriotic feature became more distinct in the 19th century, after the country had become free from the union with Denmark and had got a government of its own. As a part of the work consisted in reawakening the old Norwegian patrimony, and creating a proper Norwegian written language, we got a zealous collecting of ancient folk-tales (by P. Chr. Asbjörnsen and Jörgen Moe), popular poetry (by the vicar Landstad), music (by Lindeman) and dialects (by Ivar Aasen) From 1850 onwards we had a holder of a government scholarship of folk life research, the theologian Eilert Sundt, whose task it was to study our folklore. His publications on material culture and social conditions belong to the most important written sources of Norwegian folk life research.

In our century the work of the pioneers of the 19th century has been taken over by various institutions which are carried on by state contribution. The economy of these institutions is rather poor, a thing which has influenced their methods of working. Up to now one has only to a small extent been able to send out specially trained people for collecting information. A great part of the collecting has been done by amateurs who live in the country. The interest in local history among people has been very strong the last fifty years. This interest can for instance be seen in the founding of local societies of history and of rural district museums, and in the publishing of books, about the country districts and local historical magazines.

Quite a few of those who in this way show interest in history are attached to the central institutions as local contributors. One is trying to get at least one collaborator in each parish. In order to get hold of the person interested an inquiry generally is sent to the local government of a "herad" (parish), which again contacts the persons who are willing to help. These may be teachers, fishermen, farmers or artisans. In some cases they are given a small honorarium, but quite a few of them work without any compensation at all.

The work as a rule is carried on in the following way: The institution sends out a detailed questionnaire concerning the subject which is to be studied. As to quality, the answers collected in this way do, of course, vary according to the qualifications of the individual collaborator. On the whole, however, a large amount of valuable material has been gathered in this way. And it is worth noticing that this is material which one otherwise would not be able to get hold of.

The universities in Norway are situated in the two biggest towns, Oslo and Bergen. Each university has its particular department for folklore. The older and the bigger is *Norsk Folkeminnesamling* (The Norwegian Folklore Archives) connected with the University of Oslo. This institution was founded in 1914 and is directed by the professor of folklore. The archives contain all sorts of folklore: folk carols, fairy tales, popular tales, riddles, proverbs, rhymes, customs, beliefs, etc. Besides this, *Folkeminnesamlinga ved Universitetet i Bergen* (The Folklore Archives at the University of Bergen) has a great collection of dialects and place names. In Oslo, however, particular archives have been formed for this kind of collections.

The greater part of folklore gathered in the 19th century is found at The Norwegian Folklore Archives in Oslo, and to this institution also the greater part of folklore gathered by local contributors is sent. To indicate the amount of folk traditions that can still be found it could be mentioned that during the last thirty years the collections have been trebled. A part of the collections is published in the serial publication *Norsk Folkeminnelags Skrifter,* which up to now has appeared in sixty-eight volumes. Nearly everything printed in this publication has been gathered by amateurs. Scientific contributions have been published in the serial publication *Studia Norvegica etnologica et folkloristica.*

Questionnaires are not much used for collecting fairy tales, popular tales, etc.; on the other hand, they are used a lot in the research concerning social conditions and material culture. Concerning this a pioneer work has been done by *Instituttet for Sammenlignende Kulturforskning* (The Institute of Comparative Research in Human Culture). This institution has applied questionnaires in an extensive investigation about the history of the Norwegian farming and mountain pastures. The institute has a particular committee for the investigation of terminology, *Nemnda til Gransking av Norsk Nemningsbruk,* which has started research on a great number of more limited topics. This committee has published 137 questionnaires which have been printed in the serial publications: *Ord og Sed* and *Norveg.*

The most intensive collecting by questionnaires of living tradition

concerning material culture goes on at *Norsk Etnologisk Gransking ved Norsk Folkemuseum* (The Institute of Norwegian Ethnological Studies at the Norwegian Folk Museum). Particular attention is paid to the study of old manners of working, particularly those of farming. The collecting is carried on by the help of questionnaires and a great staff of local collaborators. In the summer-half-year, however, the functionaries usually work out in the field, often collaborating with those of the Norwegian Folk Museum. The Institute of Norwegian Ethnological Studies publishes its results in the year-book of the Norwegian Folk Museum, *By og Bygd,* and also contributes to *Norske Bygder,* the great serial publication of the museum. Each volume in this publication deals with a single province. The plan is in this way to map the cultural history of the country. The divisions deal with manners of building, communication, clothes, life and customs, art and handicraft, settling and archaeology, economy and administration, dialects, popular poetry, music and religious life.

The biggest folk museums next to the Norwegian Folk Museum are *De Sandvigske Samlinger* (The Sandvig Collections) at Lillehammer in Eastern Norway and *De Heibergske Samlinger* (The Heiberg Collections) in Sogn in Western Norway. The former is particularly known because of its rich collections of buildings, the latter because of its rich collections of implements. At these two museums as well as at the Norwegian Folk Museum the collecting of things and traditions has gone hand in hand, a method which has resulted in rich archives.

Kulturgeografisk Registrering på Vestlandet (The Culture-Geographical Registration of Western Norway) is an archive attached to the Museum of history at the University of Bergen. The working ground of this institution is limited to the counties of Western Norway and their bordering districts. The main topics, for which detailed questionnaires have been made, are house-building, arranging of farmyards, fireplaces, furniture, and rural costumes. An account of the results has been published in *Bergens Museums Arbok 1943* (the Yearbook of the Bergen Museum of 1943, Historical-antiquarian series No. 2).

Lately the Norwegian folk life research has had better working conditions. When Norsk Tiping A/S (The Norwegian Football Pool) was founded in 1948, it was decided that a part of the margin should be spent on scientific work. As far as folk life research is concerned, this has led to the possibility of sending out qualified people on field investigation to study small regions closely. Such a close study of small regions is one of the chief items of the plan of the recently founded *Instituttet for folkelivsgransking ved Oslo Universitet* (The Institute

of Ethnological Research at the University of Oslo). This is the institution for which I am working, and I will tell about my work in the following pages.

FIELD RESEARCH IN WESTERN NORWAY

The region of my field research is the county of Hordaland. The county is quite typical of Western Norway: on the North Sea there are a lot of isles; further in the fjords cut up the country towards the East; and valleys continue the gaps of the fjords far up into the high mountains which separate Eastern and Western Norway.

My native parish, Voss, lies in the passage between the arms of the fjords and the high mountains. It is one of the most typical farming parishes of the county. Westwards round the fjords and the islands people have lived by fishing and farming from early days.

A typical feature of the settling in western Norway is that the farms have been divided into many small holdings. In earlier days all the holders lived in one small farmyard. If there were six to eight holders on a farm, the farmyard might contain thirty to fifty buildings. The holdings of each holder, consisting of several small parts, were scattered all over the farm. As the official enclosure acts came into operation in the 19th century these features of settlement disappeared. In our days each holder has his soil gathered to the greatest possible extent, and the buildings have been moved from the farmyard.

The Havra farm in the parish of Haus, in the middle of Hordaland, is one of the few places where the above-described features of settlement are still preserved. In this farm not only the old conditions of property are unchanged, but also the seven holders who live there have continued to use old manners of working and old implements which modern farm machinery have superseded elsewhere.

There is a certain danger that the Harva farm may be depopulated in a short time because the young people are going away from the farm to work in industry. In the years after the last war one has been working zealously on the preserving of the original features of the old farm for coming ages. The driving force in this work of preserving is Dr. Robert Kloster, the founder of The Culture-Geographical Registration of Western Norway. When this institution in cooperation with The Society for the Preservation of Norwegian Monuments from the Past had defrayed the expenses of measuring all buildings of the farmyard, a satisfactory record of the working methods of the farm was left to be done. Dr. Kloster thought that this could best be done by the help of a film, and he moved the State's Film Counsel, which disposed of the allotments for cultural film, to set apart an amount

of money for a documentary film on Havra. Dr. Kloster was persuaded to be the leader of the scientific part of the film recording, and he asked me to be his scientific assistant. This was my first great field work. Before this time I had been out only on a few small research-excursions.

The filming of Havra began in August, 1949, and was finished in the autumn of 1950. The directions for the film were made under the leadership of Dr. Kloster in cooperation with representatives of the folk life research and those for the local society of history. The plan was to give pictures of the work on the farm during a whole year. We were to pick out the kind of work which was characteristic of each season and which at the same time was important from an ethnological point of view. Every month, as a rule, the photographer and his technical assistant came from Oslo. My part of the work was to arrange things, determine the time for the filming, and to be present to direct the photographer. All sorts of work to be filmed had to be studied closely. And I had to take down terminology and other information, which could be used as a base of comments on the film. Thus my work made me live at Havra quite a good while in addition to the time taken by the recording itself. I lived there six months altogether, dispersed over the whole year.

When we started the recording in August, the people at the farm were engaged in harvesting the grain crop. One kind of work followed the other as the autumn passed: haymaking of the second crop, digging potatoes, threshing, grinding, baking, and slaughtering. In those busy days nobody at the farm had any time to spend talking with me, and I soon discovered that if I should be able to get hold of the information I needed, I would have to take part in the farm work. It helped me a lot now that I had grown up on a farm and that I had been used to farm work from my childhood. Working together with the farm people like this, I soon came into contact with them, and I got a firsthand knowledge of the manners of working. In the beginning the people at Havra were a bit reserved towards us who were engaged in the filming. They had given their assent to the recording, but only a few of them were willing to act in front of the camera. This changed altogether when we got to know each other a bit better, and they became very helpful. Everybody was greatly interested in the film becoming a success. The film was shown to them before it was cut. It was indeed a great pleasure to us when they approved of everything and found that the film gave a true picture of their life.

As the milieu at Havra gradually took my interest more and more, I started studying sides of the life there, other than those which had

anything to do with the film. Some of the families had rich traditions. They could, for instance, tell how the farm had been divided into holdings, and they told that at a certain time four families had lived together in a house with only one large sitting-room. A study of the archives showed that the division of the farm had taken place in the 17th century, and that the division has practically not been changed since 1690. The tradition of the four families living in one house must go back to the last half of the 17th century. That period was a time of changes and of very uncertain property conditions before the size of the holdings was fixed.

It is tempting to mention a few more examples of the old traditions from Havra, but it would take too much space to do so. Besides I hope that the film we have made also will be shown to the public in America. We have got ready the big scientific film which is 3900 yards. However, the film company will make a shorter version of it too, one intended to suit the ordinary public. As long as this shorter version has not come into the market, it seems as if the scientific film is kept back too.

I should like to say a few words about the field work which I am engaged in at present. It is an investigation for *The Institute of Folk Life Research at the University of Oslo* under the leadership of Professor Nils Lid. The research area consists of my native parish Voss and those bordering close on to it, Evanger and Vossestrand. I started working in Evanger, the part of my region which lies farthest to the West. It is a parish of 1500 inhabitants and of an area of five hundred km. The greater part of the parish consists of mountain moors, but here and there valleys with steep sides cut up the country. The farms are situated in the bottom of the valleys or in the mountains. Only about half of the farms have a cart road, and even fewer have electric light. At the other farms in the summer-half-year the people must pack on horseback or carry things to and from the farm. During the winter, as a rule, they are able to use the sledge.

The railway from Bergen to Oslo goes through the main valley of Evanger. Thus it is easy for me to go from my home, which is not far from Bergen, to the center of my research field. However, as a rule, after leaving the train, I have to put on my rucksack and walk for a few hours before I reach the mountain farms where I am doing my research. As the mountain farmers communicate least with the world outside, and as they are, to a greater extent than other farmers, prevented by economy from changing to modern farm machinery, the investigation is concentrated on these farms.

Professor Lid accompanied me on my first reconnoitering tour to

plan the research and to seek for good contributors who knew the traditions well. At one of the mountain farms, we were lucky enough to meet with a couple of their eighties. Both of them were intelligent, and at the same time they possessed a lot of living tradition. It was decided that I should take down as much as possible of what these two old people could tell and afterwards gather information in other parts of the parish.

It has been very easy to come into contact with the people at Evanger. As I am from the neighbouring parish, we speak approximately the same dialect. Thus the people do not look at me as a stranger. Furthermore my mother's family comes from Evanger, and thus I have met relatives at many places. I have always been given lodging and food at the farms, which is a great advantage. One has then a chance of looking closer at the housekeeping, than if one only pops in at a farm to talk with the people. Of course I pay for food and lodging.

During the research as a rule, I start with one sort of work or another that is rich in tradition, for instance the corn harvest, slaughter, spinning or weaving. If it is not possible to study the work in execution, one has to be satisfied with an exact description of the manner of working from an old person who knows it well. Terminology and customs concerning each sort of work are asked for in detail. During these inquiries superstition is very often found. During the interview I use questionnaires printed in the serial publication *Ord og Sed,* and those from the Institute of Norwegian Ethnological Studies. Concerning local conditions at the farm, such as partition of the holdings into different fields, conditions of property, collaboration between neighbors etc. I use questionnaires from the Institute of Comparative Research in Human Culture. So far I have not been able to use film recording as an aid in this research; the only help has been an ordinary still camera. Thus the material consists of written records, photographs, and maps. Moreover, with the help of my husband, I have recorded samples of the dialect, place names, and a few folk tales by magnetophone (wire recorder).

As a typical example of the Evanger material it might be suitable to give a short description of the making of clothes and the clothing customs. At nearly every farm which I visited in November, one or more women were engaged in spinning. A seventy-six-year-old woman showed me a way of spinning which now has gone out of use. The wool that she made in this very old-fashioned way was sent to an exhibition, and a first prize was awarded to her for it. The season of spinning lasts from November to past New Year. Then they start

weaving. Most of the housewives make all they need of woolen blankets, and further they also make certain sorts of material for women's and men's clothes. The material made for women's clothes is of a particularly fine quality. How the woman makes this sort of material is supposed to show her skill in weaving.

The national costume of Evanger is now worn only on great occasions and is to be found only in a few variations. Old women, however, are able to tell about a lot of them. They were all to be worn according to strict rules. It is possible to get exact information as to when the customs of old costumes were broken and who introduced new fashions.

Very often the roads are so bad that when people at the mountain farms want to go to church, they have to put on the church-clothes when they have come down from the mountains. In earlier days they very often had their best clothes, i.e., those to be worn at church, hanging at one of the farms down in the valley. They also were allowed to stop there, go inside and eat their food, which they carried with them; and they even slept there during the night if necessary. Each mountain farmer had a "host" of his own; as a rule he paid for this service in natural products whose kind and magnitude was fixed by old tradition. In our days, when there is a railway, and the roads have been improved and multiplied, the greater part of the mountain farmers are able to get to church and come home again in one day. When a son at one of the mountain farms was to be confirmed last autumn, the family left home at six o'clock in the morning and was back home at seven o'clock in the evening. This time they had gone by motor lorry and railway a good part of the distance, which in former days had to be done partly on foot and partly by row-boat.

I have noticed particularly that a great deal of superstition is still alive in Evanger as distinct from Havra, where people are much more rationalistically minded. Quite a few of the ghost stories which I have been told have been attached to a dark, narrow valley, an old thoroughfare. I have myself passed through this valley when night was coming on, and it was a bit dismal. Thus I can easily imagine that the idea of ghosts and spirits has survived there for a long time.

In these days, however, poles for carrying electric wires have been put up in the valley, and soon electric lighting will drive away the the goblins. The scenery, however, might be impressive enough to give life to the goblins in spite of all modern technique, and probably the life of the people in Evanger will always be marked.

Instituttet for Folkelivsgransking ved Oslo Universitet Oslo, Norway

Negro Witch Stories on Tape

By Richard M. Dorson

On the third of June, 1952, I revisited my friends the E. L. Smiths in Calvin. The township of Calvin lies on a blacktop road some eleven miles south and east of Cassopolis, the county seat of Cass County in southwestern Michigan. Calvin is a colored enclave in a white farming area; Negroes have lived in Calvin and owned farms there since the 1840's, and today all the township offices are held by Negroes. On my first field trip there, in March, I had discovered that the old Northern families, who constituted the local aristocracy, preserved no folk tradition, but the newer Southern residents, who had drifted in since the 1930's via Chicago, possessed an abundance. The Smiths had proved most cordial to me on that visit. To make contacts I had gone to a Sunday service of the Chain Lake Baptist church, made myself known, and met Fred Steele, an elder of the church, who offered to take me around to likely people. Through him I met the Smiths.

Mrs. Smith was born in Mississippi, and her present husband in Georgia.[1] She has huge proportions, and energy to match, with round lustrous features that in her daughter, who lives in a well furnished "ranch" house outside Cassopolis, take on real beauty, while her two granddaughters, in their late teens, are knockouts. By contrast Mr. Smith is short and seamed, with a deep scar on his forehead. He does not farm, although he keeps cows and chickens, but works for his son-in-law who owns a successful hoisting machinery plant in Cassopolis. The Smiths live in the center of the farm area, in a gabled two-story house with a set-in porch crammed with posters, vases, a swinging sofa and faded easy chairs. Husband and wife brim over with tales and songs, folk wisdom, slave memories, and this evening I hoped to record some of their lore.

Just as I was setting up the machine in the living room, however, a visitor entered the house, a small elderly lady leading two tiny grandsons. She was introduced to me as Mrs. Mary Richardson,[2] and I

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[1] Mr. Smith was born in Oglethorpe County, Georgia, in 1886, and came north to Chicago in 1921, when the boll weevil began destroying the cotton crop. He has lived in Calvin since 1935. Mrs. Smith was born in Tupelo, Mississippi, about sixty years ago, moved to Tennessee when about twelve, and came to Chicago in 1917, where she met her present husband. It is the second marriage for both.

[2] Mrs. Richardson was born in North Carolina seventy years ago, and raised in Mississippi. Her father was part Creek. She lived in Chicago fourteen years, where she met her present husband, and moved to Calvin five years ago, to be near the earth, "like the rabbit."

found out when taking her home, after midnight, that she lived about a mile down the road in a tiny two-room shack with her crippled husband. Her Indian blood showed in thin features and tight skin. This unexpected interruption boded an upset to my recording plans, but it proved the making of an extraordinary tape. Shy and reticent at first, in the presence of a white stranger, Mrs. Richardson began to reminisce with her friend Mrs. Smith about Mississippi days, so fluently that at length I turned on the machine. None of the three understood its operation. I asked Mr. Smith to begin with the factual accounts of his grandfather, Romey Howard, who as a slave eluded the paterollers with some tall-tale exploits. Next I asked Mrs. Smith to repeat a hoodoo experience of her aunt (the point at which the present transcript begins). From then on, however, the tales and talk developed completely spontaneously, along lines unexpected by me. The speakers forgot all about the machine in the excitement of comparing hoodoo and witch narratives, and at several points all three talked simultaneously. If the whole performance had been rehearsed and memorized it could not have proceeded more effectively. The accounts were rendered with utter conviction and graphic detail; one tale prompted another, in the manner of all storytelling circles; when at one point Mrs. Richardson rose to go, Mr. Smith saved the situation by launching dramatically into a personal incident of being witch-rid in that very house; Mrs. Smith finished the tape with a stirring climax, wherein a witch was caught and destroyed. The verbal inflections, imitations of sounds and noises, and richly colored tones of the animated trio can only be suggested by the printed words. Here the tape has literally seized from the air one of those precious evanescent moments when folklore crackles and erupts in a molten flow from a kindled group.

TAPE RECORDING

Mr. Dorson: Well, maybe you'll say something, Mrs. Smith. Will you tell me what you were saying the other time you know, about how your aunt got the lizards in her—she had to go to the hoodoo woman. How did that go? [*Laughter.*]

Mrs. Smith: Well, it come a little red spot on her feet an' it just eetched [*itched*] her so bad, an' she scratched it and scratched it, an' it commenced a-swelling. It just swell, swell, and every place she would touch on her she would swell up, and then she would scratch it. She would put her hands on her jaw, on her face, and her head would all swell up, and her hands all swole up. And they'd just eetch her and eetch her.

So she'd been to the different doctors, and they'd give her medicine, and she didn't seem to get no better. So she was going to try another doctor, an' her youngest son was taking her down, an' on the way she met an old neighbor friend of theirs. An' he seed her, head all swelled up, feets all swelled up, settin' in this little buggy, so he called her—"Sister 'Melie, what's the matter with you, Sister 'Melie?" So she said, "Well, I don't know, Brother Jerry, I don't know what's the matter with me." And then she began to tell how it started, an' the doctors she had been to, an' no one had did her no good. So he said, "Sister 'Melie, you been hoodooed, somebody done hoodooed you." So she said, "Well my husband wouldn't believe that" (she called him Hon), said "Hon wouldn't believe that." He said, "You need to go down to see this ol' hoodoo woman," he called her name, I forget her name, Aunt Dinah I think. So she said "No," said "my husband wouldn't let me go." Said, "Well, you better get there and get to her *quick,* 'cause you ain't goin' to last long."

She asked him, "Would you go by my house and get my husband to let me go?" Said "Yes, you turn round an' go back." So he went home with her. An' her husband was happened to be at home, so he told her [him], said "Bud," said "you better send Sister 'Melie to this hoodoo woman, 'cause she's in a bad shape, an' she ain't going last long if you don't do something." So "All right." They convinced him to let her go.

So this oldest son of hers, which was about twelve years old, he drove the buggy and horse and carried her down there. It was a hot day. And when they got down to this woman's house—she lived in Aberdeen, Mississippi—why, this woman wasn't home, but her daughter was there, and she told A'ntie to come on in, an' she fixed a place on a couch she had there, an' let her lay down. An' first she looked up in a wardrobe, a great big ol' something called a wardrobe (they called it a wardrobe in your house, 'cause they didn't have closets in the home then, you made this great big ol' something made with doors, long glass doors, some of 'em is very pretty) and they had a quart bottle in there with something in there looked kinda like tea made up a wine, an' she gave A'ntie a drink of that—a dosed of it—an' she got a little ease an' she just went right on to sleep.

So this woman turned something in that closet, a little ol' something she turned, an' she said, "Well, Mama will be here pretty soon," say " 'cause she look in this direction." Pretty soon her mother come. Her mother come in and she looked at A'ntie,

and told her, "Yes, you in a bad shape, but I can do something for you." So she get something I think an' *'nointed* her with it. An' then she get right out in the middle of the floor, in front of her, an' *wheeled* around—just *turned* around on her heel—an' she turned *so fast,* it did, she just kep' a-wheelin' until she just—you couldn't tell what it was, an' when she stopped turnin' it was a big ol' turkey gobbler. It said "Puht, puht," an' so he went on in the kitchen, went on through the house, strut walkin', and pretty soon this natural woman come on back. And she give her some medicine to take and she told her, said "Now you *go home,* an' about four feet from your bed, outside the door," say "you dig down 'bout two feet in the ground and you goin' to dig up somepn, and when you dig up whatever you dig up, you put it in a bottle and bring it to me." And say, "I'll fix the person that hurt you."

And so A'ntie said she did, she went out and laid out about four feet from her bed and she begin to dig, and she dug and finally she dug into a little ol' rag, and cut into it, and a whole lot of little ol' wood—ants or something, they call 'em little ol' wood lice, that's what they call 'em—commenced to runnin' out, but she didn't think that was what she was supposed to get. So it come in her mind maybe that's what she supposed to get, so she picks up nine of these little ol' wood lice and put them in a bottle, and she carried them to this woman. And she said, "Well, if you hadn't a tored this rag I'd a got every one of 'em, I'd have fixed it pretty soon she'd have been dead. But you're goin' get well," she said. "But it will be a good little while before they take the effect on her."

And she taken them and fix them and A'ntie begin to go down, her feet went down, her head went down, an' she get no'mal. An' she lived all them years. That was way back there, let me see—about nineteen—oh—eight I imagine, and she lived here till—I don't know whether it was the first of the year A'ntie died or was it the fall? (Mr. Smith: Last fall, wasn't it?). Last fall I think it was. See how long she lived, since that she's got over with it. An' they said this woman that cured her was one of the *witches.* You know, they tried to get up everybody that was a witch—they trying to find them out to see who they was. Well, this woman is dead now. The last we heard about her, A'ntie said she heard that she was dead. But they said she was a witch, could really turn. Course I would like to see that to know whether them things being true myself. Course I don't know but that's a very true story, 'cause my Dad went to see A'ntie when she was

like that, you see, when she was his sister-in-law. He went to see her when she was in that condition an' I talked with her many a time after she got over with it.[3]

Mr. Dorson: Have you ever heard anything like that, Mrs. Richardson?

Mrs. Richardson: Sure, I heard of witches. I've heard of people's getting poisoned.

Mr. Dorson: How did that happen?

Mrs. Richardson: Well, my grandmother went down to see her son's wife. She had a grown boy an' he married a woman, an' the woman he married—her mother, his wife's mother—was said to be an old cunjer (we called it). An' she went down to the daughter's house one day, just like I go down to my son's house, an' say, "Ben, why don't you patch your husband's pants? Let me show you how to put a patch on there so it won't pucker." An' she got mad with the mother-in-law for goin' down there bossin' her around in her house. She'd married her son an' she didn't want her mother-in-law in there teaching her nothin'. So she gets mad with her, an' she put a dose of little rags in her bedtick—a feather mattress. An' it was sewed up all the way round. I've heard my father tell it.

Well, Patten didn't—know my grandmother, an' I know when she was actin' that way, but I wasn't old enough to know

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[3] In her previous telling of this story (March 19), Mrs. Smith ended by saying that if her aunt had brought all the lice, "the person what had put it down for her would have died in nine days. But she would outlive that woman. And she did—we was watching for it. A'ntie died last fall. That other woman wanted her husband" (the usual triangle situation in hoodooing).

I miscued in asking about the lizards, which belong to another episode. "A hoodoo doctor used to stay with us. We called him Uncle John, because he was an elder person. He got angry at the woman he was going with, and made lizards run up and down under the hide. She was in such misery that he took his pocketknife and cut them three lizards out. He said he put them on her. (He used to go with Frank and Jesse James.)"

For personal cases of hoodooing and conjuring, comparable to this and the following two stories, the richest collection appears in *Drums and Shadows, Survival Studies among the Georgia Coastal Negroes,* assembled by the Savannah Unit of the Georgia Writers' Project of the Work Projects Administration (Athens, Ga., 1940). See also Newbell N. Puckett, *Folk Beliefs of the Southern Negro* (Chapel Hill, 1926), chs. 3 and 4, "Voodooism and Conjuration"; Zora Hurston, "Hoodoo in America," *Journal of American Folklore,* 44 (1931), 317-417, esp. 400-411, "Conjure Stories"; "Concerning Negro Sorcery in the United States," *idem,* 3 (1890), 281-287; Portia Smiley in *idem,* 32 (1919), 379-381, "Conjure-Doctor"; Carl Carmer, *Stars Fell on Alabama* (N.Y., c. 1934), 215-222, "Conjure Woman"; *Lay My Burden Down,* ed. B. A. Botkin (Chicago, 1945), 29-35, "The Power."

Note the identification of the hoodoo woman with the witch, in Mrs. Smith's story. Other informants say that "Witches an root men hab duh same magic powuh" (*Drums and Shadows,* 58), and that witches are the wives of hoodoo men (Aylett Royal, "I'se Sho' Nuff Lucky," *Straight Texas,* PTFS 13 [1937], 140).

what it was all about. And they had lived in log houses with the j'ices wasn't covered, the ceiling wasn't hid. Them old j'ices went from wall to wall. So my grandmother took a spell and she set up on top of the—crawled up the wall an' got on that j'ice, an' set astraddle of it, an' sang, an' my Daddy took me down to see her 'cause they all thought she goin' die. And she sung a little ol' song about

> The ol' grey horse come out the wilderness,
> Come out the wilderness.

Just crazy song. Doctor really he was plumb crazy. I was thrilled. They put pants on her, she clung so—clung like a *wreck,* just anywhere, all over the house. So they decided she was poisoned, hoodooed, or somepn. Some object I didn't never believe in—if somebody didn't put some poison in me I didn't believe they couldn't do nothin' with me. I didn't believe nobody could plant nothin' I could step over it or lay on it, it would take effect.

So there was a man—I never forgot that ol' hoodoo man's name, a little white man too—ahuckin (?) I can't call it, look like I ought to just know it. But anyhow he said, "You go ahead on back, home, an' she'll be restin' pretty good when you get there." That's what he told my Daddy. An' sure enough, my grandma had done dozed off to sleep, Papa say, when he got there. And say, "The first somebody comes there, that's the one fixed that dose, and give her." Say, "Don't let nobody in that house till I get there." So this man come on behind her, an' who was the first one that come there? You riddle.

Mrs. Smith: I wouldn't know.

Mrs. Richardson: It was her son.

Mrs. Smith: Yes!

Mrs. Richardson: Her son. His wife fixed up the dose, give it to her husband, he took it down to his mother's house and put it in the corner of the bed mattress—an' she sleep on it till she done lost her mind. I call her crazy. An' the brothers wanted to kill him, my Daddy, an' my Uncle, an' my other uncle, Uncle Zeke, an' Uncle Benny, an' Uncle Jake, they wanted to kill him, because he put it in their mother's bedtick, for his wife, to please his wife's mother. An' they took it offa her—that ol' man took it off her—she come no'mal, and act like a woman had some sense.
[*All three talk at once.*]

Mrs. Richardson: I lived in a house when I stayed at King and Annison's, I was cleanin' off the yard, diggin' the grass off the yard,

an' I dug up a little skillet—little round skillet, with a handle to it, with three legs to it—'bout that long. An' under that skillet was a pint—a half a pint bottle—an' there was about that much water in the bottle when I dug it up.

Well, I wanted a little skillet (it was a cute little fireplace skillet), to cook on the fireplace—you see the legs would hold it up. An' I takes the bottle and th'ows it out the yard, down the hill (I lived side the woods), an' they tell me—the woman when I told it, I told it to Mrs. Balmo who lived next door to me—I say, "Look here, what a pretty little skillet I found under, under the bottom step, buried level, an' the skillet turned over the bottle." An' she said, "Where'd you get that skillet from?" Said "That was Nora's skillet, she used to stay here." "I found that and dug it out under the step," and I says, "There's a bottle under it, has some water in it." An' you know what she told me that was? Said that woman killed her daughter, dried up her water, an' buried it." (*Mrs. Smith:* Yeah!). An' when the baby was born there wasn't no water. (No!) It was a dry birth, and she died.[4]

Mr. Dorson: Mrs. Smith, that's like what you were telling me what happened in Chicago, remember? Don't you want to tell that one, about Mrs. Williams? That was quite a story.

Mrs. Richardson: Well, chillun, I'm goin' home.

Mr. Smith: Well, I had a witch or somethin' ride me once. I don't know what the deuce it was. I heard it before day in the morning.

Mr. Dorson: A witch was riding you?

Mr. Smith: Yeah, I heard it when it come in the house. I was awake.

Mr. Dorson: Really?

Mr. Smith: It come on got up on the bed, and I could feel it when it pressed the bed—me and another fellow was in the bed together. And it got up on me, and I couldn't say a word. And I commenced a-twistin' this a-way, and I lay flat on my back. And I commenced a-twistin' an' a-whinin' in my sleep— "Nnh, nnh,

[4] When I revisited Mrs. Richardson on September 13, she amplified this account, explaining that Mrs. Balmo "was more in'rested in the bottle that was under the skillet than in the skillet. So she went out in the weeds and found it. And she took the bottle and tested the water, and said it was urine. She carried it to the doctor and had it tested. It was the dead woman's water. So she and the baby both died.

"There was a man and a wife living there. And the man took a sweetheart in too. The sweetheart got Nora's urine, 'cause she wanted the husband —and she got him too. Dried up her bladder, till there was no water. And the baby couldn't pass either, there wasn't any water to pass the baby (it's the water that bursts first, makes it slick and slimy), it was a dry birth. A woman can't deliver a baby if there's no water, no blood. Nothing can't do it, a cow can't do it. The doctor announced it was a dry birth, she couldn't deliver."

nnh"—an' this boy ketched me. An' I heard the thing when it hit the floor, 'bout like a big rat or something—*bip*—and out the door it went, and went on out and you could hear it when it went on out through the door. I say, "You better go, you devil you." [*Laughter.*] It was about four o'clock in the morning. That's true.

Mrs. Richardson: Mr. Smith, I know you ain't jokin'. Because listen, I laid down one day at *twelve o'clock.* My husband was went to carry the mule to the lot an' I cooked dinner, and I said, "Well I'll take me a little nap. I had a birthday almanac—one of those birthday almanacs you know—I was interested in readin'. I laid down, and I told Uncle Pete, well I wasn't 'sleep, it looked like a shadow come over my eyes. And I saw a woman come in the door. Both—all the doors were open—I lived in a little ol' two-room house, and I was layin' cross the bed. And she walked in an' she stepped straddle of me and she got on me, an' she just started doin' this a-way, "Runh-runh-runh-runh," an' she shook me till I said, "Well, Lord, I know I'm goin' to die." I give up to die, and I heard her when she hit the floor—*vlop.* She got offa me an' walked right out the door.

Mr. Smith: An' I heard that thing just as natural.

Mrs. Richardson: An' that was twelve o'clock in the day—didn't look like I went to sleep, I hadn't had time to go to sleep, she just overshadowed me.

Mr. Smith: Well, I heard my grandfather tell it—

Mrs. Richardson: Rode me till I was *drunk.*[5]

Mr. Smith: He said it was back in slavery times, there was a woman they called a "Mammy Rye," an' the boys all teased her. She was a witch. An' he said you'd hear her comin'—zip—zip—zip. They'd say, "Where you goin' Mammy Rye?" Says, "Mm boy, you better git goin'—I'll give you devil before day in the mornin'." An' he said one'd have to stay awake and the others sleep, that was the only way they could get to go to sleep. I heard him tell that more times than a little.

Mrs. Smith: Wasn't no way they could move—git out the way of?

Mr. Smith: Well, they—they stayed there, you see.

Mrs. Smith: They tryin' to get rid of all those witches now. I know

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[5] Numerous cases of witch-riding are reported in *Drums and Shadows,* 6, 16, 24, 34, 44-45, 59-60, 95-96, 108. See also Puckett, 151-153; *South Carolina Folk Tales,* compiled by Workers of the Writers' Program of the Works Projects Administration in South Carolina (Columbia, S.C., 1941), 92, 93-96; *The Frank C. Brown Collection of North Carolina Folklore,* Vol. I (Durham, N.C., 1952), 650.

'twas some people—that's a long time ago—course there's some witches here, was here. They don't bother you now, but when we first moved here they tried their best to run us away from here. Yes, there's witches.

[*All three talking.*]

Mrs. Richardson: I thought that was way back yonder in slavery times. I thought there wasn't nothing like that now.

Mrs. Smith: Yes there is. They tried their best to run us 'way from here. Come in here in all kinds of forms.

Mr. Dorson: You mean in Calvin here?

Mrs. Smith: Yes. Yessir, right in this house it was somebody. I don't know whether they dead now or not, but they done quit coming here. They used to come here [*sighing*]—witches jumped on me here, an' they used to bother the children here (I had the grandchildren here when they was little). Witches was terrible trying to run us away from here—didn't want us to be here.

Mr. Smith: My grandson—we used to sleep upstairs—an' he'd go to bed at night an' way in the night he'd wake up an' he'd holler and cry.

Mrs. Smith: Sometimes before he'd ever wake up.

Mr. Smith: He'd holler an' cry, "Ol' horse goin' to eat me up, ol' horse got his mouth open, he goin' to bite me, he goin' to bite me." An' when he first started we thought, you know, he just carryin' on so much devilment in the daytime — — — . He'd just wake up in his sleep you know, but we had to go git him, and he kept a-doing that an' we finally had to go git him an' put him in the bed with us, an' he'd get all right. That was right upstairs, upstairs.

Mrs. Smith: That was before he'd go to sleep he'd see him. He'd say, "Mommy, here come that ol' horse, here he come Mama, see him, look at him with his mouth open Mama, grab me, grab me" [*high, squeaky*]. An' I'd grab him up, you know, an' take him up an' he'd say, "Hey Mommy," an' I'd say, "Oh he ain't goin' eat you [*indistinct*]—'cause I know what a feeling it is when you're scared.

Mr. Smith: I thought you know, to start with it was just devilment you know, but found out different than that.

Mrs. Smith: An' I used to see him—I'd be sitting up there sewin'—sometime I'd see a woman come up the stairs you know, and she'd step over there in the other room you know, an' I see once when I sitting there. "Who's there?" Turned around—my back was to the room, I was sewin' to get light from the window. An' I look

an' I said, "Oh," says. It looked like a woman, but that was Charles the youngest boy, an' I thought he was teasin' me, and I thought he was back there teasing, an' pretty soon here he come walkin' up natural. I said, "Charles, wasn't that you that was in the room just now?" An' he said, "No Mama, you know I just come in there."

Mr. Smith: Well I heard Joe Kratoff, Joe Kratoff set right out here at this big cherry tree right out there, an' he having somebody, he did tell who it was, come along here one evening just about dusk dark, dusk dark good. An' it was a woman standing there dressed—he did tell what kind of dress she had on an' all. An' she wasn't natural, wasn't a natural woman, but she was dressed up like a woman. An' he went on up the road an' he wanted to turn around an' come back, to see.

Mrs. Smith: In the daytime I used to see a woman, had on a little ol' kinda reddish dress, about the color of this lamp. She come across that bridge, an' just be walkin', 'lone, till she would git right even by my mailbox, she would just go *out,* just disappear. An' they used to hear something that come there that weren't, an hear somethin' in the basement just like—big as a man—"Whoopdidee, whoopdidee, whoopdidee, whoopdidee, whoopdidee, whoopdidee," down there. An' I taken a flashlight down there an' lookin', and you wouldn't see a thing down there. They tried their best to run us out of here but I just kep' prayin' an' all, an' put out salt and put up horseshoes. . . .

Mr. Smith: They claim makin' new steps an' sech things as that . . .

Mrs. Smith: An' burn red pepper . . .

Mr. Smith: That'll keep them from comin' round an' botherin' you—witches an' things.

Mrs. Smith: Do what?

Mr. Smith: Put new steps an' things to your house.

Mrs. Smith: We just put some old steps, 'cause we had to have some.

Mr. Smith: We just fixed some more steps out there an' they finally quit botherin' us here.

Mrs. Smith: Yes, there's still some of them things is still—still existin' I guess.

Mr. Smith: The same devil then as now.

Mrs. Smith: But it's just different people the devil can have power with to do things. Now if you let the devil talk to you—you just let him talk with you—he can tell you wonders. I don't let him talk with me. I just makes him *get*—because he can tell you things. Don't never have a conversation with him.

Mr. Smith yawns loudly.

Mrs. Smith: [*mumbling*] He can sure tell you something.

Mr. Dorson: How does putting in new steps stop all that?

Mr. Smith: I don't know—I've just hearn people say that. I don't know whether it's true or not.

Mrs. Smith: They don't like to come over new lumber, they say. New things anyway. An' some of them say if you get a pine—get a piece of pine, say a board—an' put down in your floor, they won't come over that.

Mrs. Richardson: Well I heard folks say, take a broom an' lay it in the door an' they won't walk over the broom. They'll sit there all night countin' the straws in the broom. And when day comes you'll see them look like a little jug. Ain't you seen foxfire?

Mrs. Smith: Uhhuh.

Mrs. Richardson: Well, I heard people say they look just like foxfire.[6]

Mrs. Smith: Well I'll tell you once what I started to tell a while ago. When I was, oh, 'bout ten, eleven years old, I was workin' with some white people, and this man, he just like to tell *so much.* About a nicest white man as ever I wanna see, near as I can remember from a child. An' he was tellin' me there was witches ridin' him. He used to call me Zee, wouldn't say Leozie—"Zee." His girl named Vera, called her Vee an' me Zee. Say, "Did you know," say, "a witch rode me last night." Say, "Look here just how I got my hair turned." He was redhead. We was always taught that redheaded people was the meanest mens there was, you see. An' I said, "Maybe it's 'cause you're so *mean.*" But he said, "You know a witch just rode me last night, rode me, rode

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[6] Talk of witch-riding and other witch evil almost always leads into a discussion of means to ward off or catch witches. See Puckett, 154-156, "Driving Off and Capturing Witches." The informants in *Drums and Shadows* speak of laying a broom across the door, sulphur around the house, a knife or a Bible under the pillow, salt on the bedcover (4, 20, 24 and 57, 24). A North Carolina Negro spread brown straws around the house (*Frank C. Brown Collection,* I, 650). A witch must pick up mustard seed lying before the door, but since she can't hold over ten she drops and recounts them until morning (Hurston, "Hoodoo in America," 394). Break a needle, stick the point in the eye, and lay it on the hearth by the supper, and in the morning the witch will be found with her big toe in her eye (Annah R. Watson, "Comparative Afro-American Folk-Lore," *The International Folk-Lore Congress of the World's Columbian Exposition,* ed. Helen W. Bassett and Frederick Starr, Chicago, 1895, p. 335). A horseshoe over the door makes a witch traverse the road covered by the horse, until day comes; pins placed in the seat of a chair will impale the skin of the witch and prevent her from slipping it off in order to ride the sleeper (Mary W. Minor, "How to Keep Off Witches (as related by a Negro)," *Journal of American Folklore,* 2, 1895, p. 76).

The commonest way of catching and exposing the witch becomes a widespread folktale, filling her removed skin with salt and red pepper. Sometimes this is told as a specific rather than a generalized happening (e.g., *Drums and Shadows,* 80-81; Hurston, 394).

me, rode me, an' rode me, until I just couldn't sleep."

Well, I had heard my mother say, you know way back then when they had these sifters, great big round sifters, you know (*Mrs. Richardson:* Pitty-patty), do thisa way to sift out of, your flour meal—an' I said, "Mr. Sparks," I said (I was a little talker you know, ten to five, like me you know), I said, "Mama say, if you take this sifter, and put some salt on it, a handful of salt, an' turn it bottom side upwards, say you'll catch that witch, an' the next mornin' when you wake up the witch will be there." An' oh, he used to just laugh, you know, an' take me up on his lap, an' oh, just looked like he thought an awful lot of me.

He said, he tol' me, "Hon, Zee (I always come to tell everyone goodnight before I go home, it wasn't so far, I could run all the way), he says, "Zee, come early in the mornin' 'cause we're goin' to have that witch, cause I'm goin' to th'ow that sifter down tonight." You know he's always half teasin' me 'bout this here, 'bout me tellin' what Mother said. Say "All right," say "I'm goin' get me a handful of salt." My right name is Joseph, he called me Miss Joe, say "Miss Joe, I want you to git me a big handful of salt an' put it down at my bed and bring that sifter an' turn it down." So she [I] did. She [I] put a big heapful, a big handful, of that kinda coarse heavy salt down, an' then they taken that big ol' sifter and turned it down, an' say, when he got, when he git into bed.

The nex' morning I woke up early and "I'm just go down to Sparks dim early this morning, goin' catch the witch." An' you know, when I got down there—they hadn't got awoke up you see —I knocked on the door and the boy that sleepin' in the other room—one of the boys—he opened the door. He 'bout—long 'bout my age. An' they always so tickled when I come early, you know, we'd have a row. [*Whispers.*] "I say, Ivy." "Yes." "I say, let's go an' see this—Daddy catch the witch."

So we eased in there an looked, an' man, you know we seed a spider 'bout big as my hand. An' I said, "Hi Mr. Sparks." An' he said, "Whatsa matter?" I said, "You done caught the witch."

He hopped up an' looked, an' you know, that ol' spider's legs had got down in the wire of that sifter and had swole underneath, an' on top, and he couldn't pull it out. An' he was the biggest spider you ever seed in your life, and he had a big wide mouth 'bout an inch wide, an' just doin' that mouth like that you know, an' he looked like he had two lips. Sure. Big as—'bout big as my hand, and the biggest ol' legs, they caught in that sifter.

[*Loud and excited.*] Now that is just as true as we look at each other, an' if the Mr. Sparks was livin' he could tell you. I don't know whether any of them, the family of them, is livin' that seed it or not, because it's been a long time since I seed them, heered tell of 'em. But we caught that big ol' spider over there, so I said I guess that ol' witch had turned an' turned an' that's the last thing he could turn to.

[*The tape ended here, but Mrs. Smith added the following words.*]

The witch turned and turned to the last thing that he could turn to, and that was a spider. And so the spider was the witch. And they taken him out doors and put some kerosene on some straw and the sifter over it and burned him up and th'ow the sifter away.[7]

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[7] Sifters are placed in different positions to catch the witch. If it is laid face down before the door, the witch will be found in the morning as a ball of white smoke (Puckett, 150-151); she must stop to count the holes (*ibid.*, 163); she cannot count over five, so she jumps through the last hole (Mary W. Minor, *loc. cit.*, 76); hang the sifter over the keyhole, and she counts until daylight (*South Carolina Folk Tales*, 77); a fork thrust through the sieve impales the witch, and next day an old woman dies of "misery in the breast" (Fanny D. Bergen, "Two Negro Witch-Stories," *Journal of American Folklore*, 12, 1899, pp. 145-146).

Editor's Page

With this issue *Midwest Folklore* concludes it second year of publication. We look back on the past two years with some pride, for we feel that we have firmly established ourselves along side our sister publications—*New York Folklore Quarterly, Southern Folklore Quarterly,* and *Western Folklore*—as one of the four major regional folklore journals in the United States. Moreover, we look upon our international circulation with a pleasure almost equal to our pride, for we feel quite strongly that folklore is not an island unto itself in any country, particularly in the United States, and that to understand the folklore of one's own country requires a knowledge of the folklore of other countries.

The success which *Midwest Folklore* has achieved could not have been brought about except through the help of its subscribers and the regional societies with which it is affiliated. Nor could it have been

achieved without the aid of individual scholars who have actually worked upon its publication. And that, perhaps, is the principal thing of which we wish to speak on this page.

With this issue, two changes have been made in the staff of *Midwest Folklore*: Professor Jonas Balys has given up the position of Business Manager to go on with his personal research, and Professor Herbert Halpert has resigned the Review Editorship so as to have more time to devote to scholarship and to his activities as Vice-President of the American Folklore Society. The new Business Manager of *Midwest Folklore* is Mrs. Remedios Wycoco Moore. The new Review Editor is Professor Daniel G. Hoffman of Columbia University.

To Professor Balys we wish to extend our thanks for performing what is often a thankless task very well. What with the rising costs of printing—and they rise, and rise, and rise—and the endless clerical work involved, the labors entailed in the business managership of a journal such as this seem to go on and on, never to end. Professor Balys devoted himself to the job, and the success of *Midwest Folklore* is in large part a result of his efforts.

Professor Halpert is in many ways responsible for the very existence of *Midwest Folklore,* for it was he who was the first editor of the *Hoosier Folklore Bulletin,* and it was from this journal that *Midwest Folklore* grew. Moreover, Professor Halpert's untiring energy in obtaining reviews which were among the most significant and most valuable of those published in any folklore journal gave a tremendous boost to our prestige. *Midwest Folklore* would not be what it is today had it not been for his help, not only in tirelessly procuring reviews, but also in giving freely of advice from his own very wide and important knowledge of folklore in general and editorial practices in particular.

To both Professor Balys and Professor Halpert the editor and the advisory board extend their sincere thanks and their hopes that success will continue to attend them.

Folk Singing on Beaver Island

By Ivan H. Walton

Folk singing on Beaver Island is of special interest because of its variety and extensiveness and because of the important place it has held in the social and cultural life of the limited but highly homogeneous people living on the Island, who for nearly a century have been quite isolated from the mainland, state, and outside world. Folk singing became one of their chief sources of entertainment, and it preserved their group consciousness and many of their dominating attitudes.

The Island, the *Ile d'Castor* of the 16th and 17th century French fur-traders, is approximately sixteen miles long and from two to six wide, and it is located in northern Lake Michigan about twenty miles off the northwest corner of the Lower Peninsula of the state of Michigan. Its long axis is in a north-south direction. It is of glacial formation, and its soil is mostly of a gravelly nature and not very productive. It has some sand dunes along the west side, a half dozen small inland lakes, and an excellent and spacious landlocked harbor on the northeast corner. To the north and west are about a dozen other islands ranging in area from about five square miles to an acre or less. Together they comprise the Beaver group of Lake Michigan islands. Big Beaver, as it is known locally, is the only one that has had a continuing white or even Indian occupation.

The immediate forebears of the present dominant group of inhabitants, the Irish, came mostly from County Donegal in the extreme northwest of Ireland during the decade following the expulsion from the Island of James Jesse Strang's Mormon colony in 1856. In that year Irish fishermen and their friends from the north side of Beaver Harbor and from the Michigan mainland, and from as far away as Mackinac Island, who had suffered real or fancied wrongs at the hands of the Mormons, swooped down upon the helpless colonists after the assassination of their leader Strang, and drove them property-less aboard the awaiting vessels which took them to Milwaukee and other ports south to Chicago.

Letters to economically hard-pressed relatives in sea-indented, barren Donegal soon brought fisher and farmer folk from there in considerable numbers to this northern island already fabled for its timber and furs and especially for the seemingly inexhaustible supply of marketable lake trout in its surrounding waters. Most of these early immigrants made only brief stopovers in New York City or Montreal before

continuing on by water or overland to their island destination, and a few still living in their island homes at the time of the writer's first visit there in 1932 conversed in their native Gaelic. Land was cheap. The Mormons who had lived there earlier in comparative isolation had cleared farms and constructed roads and log buildings, and had made their village of St. James, named for their leader, the seat of government not only of the island, but of a considerable section of the mainland as well.

The new inhabitants established a "little Ireland" that was not without some characteristics of their native Donegal. The land was rolling and relatively unproductive; the climate was much the same; and always near at hand was the ever-dominating sea, the source of much of their livelihood and no small number of their tragedies. The newcomers bore such names as Bonnar, Connelly, Dunlevy, Gallagher, Green, Kelly, Kilty, Malloy, Martin, O'Donnell, McCann, McCarthy, McCauley, McDonough, and Roddy. Some families became so numerous that their friends resorted to an intriguing system of line nicknames to distinguish the individuals. They brought with them from Ireland their religion; their occupations of fishing, sea-faring, and farming; and their characteristic Gaelic nature, sociability, and folklore. A limited number of residents of other north-European stock were among them and also a limited and varying number of Ojibway Indians. The latter group, however, were on the far side of a strict color-line and generally ignored. Sailor captain Manus Bonnar, who was born on the Island in 1858 of parents who had arrived but a short time earlier, stated characteristically that in his youth, "the Island was known as a home of tame Indians and wild Irishmen."

No reliable statistics of Island population seem to be available. Several of the older inhabitants, however, estimate that at the turn of the century there were all told about one thousand people living there, but the source of their livelihood—fishing, lumbering, schooner-sailing, and farming—was already declining; and in the next decades many of them, especially the young, sought their fortunes in the industrial areas of the mainland. In 1940 there were less than half of the peak number, and today probably not more than three hundred have their year-around home on the Island.

In numbers and industry the Beaver Island Irish have never equalled their Mormon predecessors, but in sociability and especially in the singing of folksongs, it is doubtful that any equal area of their adopted country has surpassed them.

Living conditions on the Island have been particularly favorable to the preservation and creation of songs. First, as already noted, the

people there have to a large extent a common racial, geographical, and occupational background. Second, they have had a high degree of isolation, and as a result little or no tendency to disparateness. Until recently they have been completely shut off from the mainland and the outside world each year during the four winter months when navigation was closed on the Upper Lakes except for irregular mail delivery by dog sled or other messenger when the twenty mile stretch of intervening lake was covered with a dependable thickness of ice. During the other eight months communication was only by sailing vessel or steamer. In recent years the telephone, airplane, and radio have changed the situation considerably. This long comparative isolation made them quite self-sufficient for entertainment. Third, the average Irishman seems to be blessed with a strong penchant for sociability; and drinking, dancing, and singing seem to have been their chief source of enjoyment. These activities suffered but little diminution during the Prohibition Era. They liked songs that are concerned with the sea. They also brought home songs from the mainland winter lumber camps; and like most other normal people, they enjoyed traditional songs and ballads that came to them from a wide variety of sources, particularly those from Old Ireland.

Many of the middle-aged or older people on the Island will, with an appropriate opening, or even without one, still tell of the song competitions that a while back used to take place between groups in rival saloons across the harbor from each other, and "by next daylight neither had sung the other down." During the long winter months frequent dances were held in the village of St. James and in the farm homes, and, while the fiddler rested, or when the others got danced out, they would frequently spend the remainder of the night singing. Some individuals sang at their work or wherever they were—in a lumbercamp bunkhouse, at the wheel of a Great Lakes schooner, in their fields, in their homes, or in any of numerous gathering places.

The songs mentioned below were collected in manuscript and on disc recordings during several visits to the Island between the years 1932 and 1940 and a few by correspondence since then. Some of these manuscripts and recordings are duplicates—the same song recorded by different singers or by the same singer at different times—and some are in varying stages of completeness, but altogether they comprise a considerable collection.

Ireland's young men, especially those from north coastal Donegal, have been fishermen and seafaring men for long ages, and those who came over to Beaver Island and their descendants have fished and

sailed the Great Lakes for nearly a century, and part of their harvest has been the numerous songs they brought to the Island annually at the close of navigation. Some of these originated among Lakesmen, but more were learned from salt-water men who drifted inland to the Lakes for temporary sojourns. Some of the Island songs which originated on the Lakes include such well-known ones as "The Red Iron Ore," "The Timber Drover (Drogher) Bigler," "The *Persian's* Crew," "The Steam Tug *Olsen,*" "The Smugglers of Buffalo," "The Drunken Captain," and others. The original of the last-named is, of course, an ocean song which begins, "Off Canso Strait our schooner lay," but an Island singer localized the events narrated on Lake Erie, and began it, "Off Cedar Point our schooner lay."

Ocean songs sung on the Island include the "Stately Southerner," "The Lowlands" (Child 286), "The New (High) Barbaree," "The Lady Leroy," "The *Cumberland's* Crew," "The Bold *Princess Royal,*" "The Gallant Brigantine," "The *Beaver* Brig," "The *Flying Cloud,*" "Paul Jones," "The Banks of Newfoundland," "The Stowaway," "The Ship that Never Returned," "The Schooner *Hesperus,*" and others. The last mentioned will be recognized as Longfellow's poem of that name. Fragments of capstan shanties such as "Away Rio," "The Banks of the Sacramento," "Shenandoah," and "Highland Laddie," were also obtained. A stanza of the latter was paraphrased to:

> Were you ever in Marquette (Quebec)?
> Sailor laddie, bully laddie,
> Red ore cover'n all the deck,
> My bully sailor laddie.

In addition to these songs acquired from shipmates and sailor friends, the Islanders have also kept alive some songs that originated on the Island and are concerned with marine events. In the late sailing season of 1873, three boys in their late teens left the Island in a small sailboat for the mainland for needed winter supplies. On their return they were overtaken by a severe squall, and, although their boat drifted upon the south shore of the Island, the boys, two Gallagher brothers and a friend Tommy Boyle, were never seen again. The event gave rise to at least two songs that are still current; one entitled by some "Crossing Lake Michigan," and by others "The Gallagher Boys," opens with the lines,

> It was in October of Seventy-three,
> They left Beaver Harbor upon a calm sea
> Bound for Traverse City, their destination to go,
> They were crossing Lake Michigan where the stormy
> winds blow.

The other is entitled "The Gallant Tommy Boyle," and relates his virtues and the grief of his parents and friends.

Another local song, "The Ill-fated *Vernon,*" tells of the loss of the new passenger and freight propellor in a night storm in October in 1877 in northwestern Lake Michigan with all on board including six Island crewmen. A later song entitled "In Honor of Captain Kilty," is concerned with the loss of the car ferry *Pere Marquette 18* which foundered and sank twenty miles off Cheboygan, Wisconsin, in September, 1910, with her Beaver Island captain and twenty-eight crewmen. Still another, "The *Clifton's* Crew," tells of the loss of the freighter *Clifton* in Lake Huron in a storm in the late season of 1924, with all hands including Captain Emmet Gallagher and others from the Island. In the middle thirties, the Steamer *Merold,* after completing her regular round-trip between Charlevoix and Beaver Harbor (St. James), attempted to salvage some gasoline from a tanker stranded on a reef north of the Island and suffered a violent explosion which wrecked and sank the vessel and took the lives of all on board. A recorded song describes the event.

There are two others of a less tragic nature. "The *Light Ship 98,*" written by a Beaver Islander, describes good-naturedly life aboard the lightship anchored on the Eleven-Foot Shoal off Manistique on the North Shore. The other is entitled, "The Fisher Yankee Brown." According to the song the "Yankee's" accomplishments didn't entirely live up to his accounts of them,

> Once when beating down the Lake, he had to come about,
> He heeled the Mattie o'er so far he scooped up thirty trout.

During the last half of the last century, when Michigan's superb white-pine forests were being riotiously and wastefully exploited by the invading lumber barons, young men from Beaver Island as from many other places, spent their winters in lumber camps, and, when they returned home in the spring, brought with them the songs they had learned in the bunk house. For three quarters of a century Beaver Islanders have remembered and sung "The Shantyman's Alphabet," "The Foreman Young Munroe," ("Jam on Gerry's Rock"), "Harry Dale," "The Falling of the Pine," "The Little Eau Pleine," (one singer calls it "The Lill' U Plain,") "Jack Haggerty's Flat River Girl," and others. "Johnnie" Green, an Islander, with a most phenomenal repetoire of songs, as will be pointed out later, recalled that he had learned many of his non-lumbercamp songs from fellow workmen in the lumbercamps in the Manistique region.

By far the larger group of songs obtained on the Island originated

far from there, and a considerable portion long before the ancestors of the present occupants crossed the Atlantic. These for convenience can be divided into three loosely-formed groups: those originating in the United States, those from England and Scotland, and, most numerous and seemingly most cherished, those from Old Ireland. The variety and number in each group are quite surprising.

In the American group are some with a war background such as "Captain Molly Pitcher," "The Last Fierce Charge," and "James Bird"; some of "love gone wrong" such as "The Flower of Albany," "The Lily of the Lake," "The Creole Girl of Lake Ponchartrain," "Fair (Young) Charlotte," and "Fair Fanny More"; and some immigrant songs including "Lament of an Irish Immigrant," "My Parents Lived in Connaught," "In Wild Americay"; "Patrick Sheehan," and such others as "The Indian's Lament," the highwayman song, "Cole Younger," the well-known Virginia railroad song, "The Old 97," "The Chatworth Wreck," and "The Roaming Gambler."

A large group came from across the North Channel and the Irish Sea. From Scotland came "Robin Thompson's Daughter," "The Bonnie Highland Soldier," "The Pride of Glencoe," and Burns' "Highland Mary." From England came a dozen or more including fragments of "The Derby Ram," and "The Frog That Went A'Courtin," and versions of "Captain Wedderbourne's Courtship," "Barbara Allen," and "The House Carpenter" (Child Nos. 46, 84, and 242, respectively), "Brennan On the Moor," "Mary of the Wild Moor," "The Rich Merchant," "The Middlesex Flora," "The Banks of Claudy," "Bloody Waterloo," "Bengin on the Rhine," and others. The "Liverpool Girls," became among lake sailors the "Buffalo Girls," and on the Island, "The Beaver Island Girls," and it describes in part the cruise of the fishing boats—all under sail—straining canvas to get back into Beaver Harbor from their annual July 4th race round Garden Island so as to be there when the Beaver Island girls arrived for the big evening dance.

Songs from or about Ireland and the Irish are the most numerous. Such pro-Irish, anti-British songs as "Sentenced to Death" and "Skibbereen" are sung with much feeling as are those of a nostalgic nature, such as "Old Erin," "Dear Old Ireland," "The County Tyrone," "Sweet Raquale," "Gra Gal McCree," "Hibernia's Lovely Jean," "Bonny Kathleen," "The Wexford Girl," the stirring song of the Irish chieftain, "O'Donnell Oboo," and many others.

Still another group, all very Irish, express their love of wit and good fun. These include such songs as "The Hat Me Father Wore,"

"The Irish Barber," "Kelly Have You No Shame At All?" "Mrs. McLaughlin's Party," "Mrs. McSorley's Twins," "The Widow's Pig," "The Old Leather Breeches," "Casey and O'Donnell," "Shamus O'Brien, Why Don't You Come Home?" and "Kathleen Mavourneen, Won' You Let Me In?"

I cannot close this account of folk singing on Beaver Island without at least brief mention of a few Island singers. One inquiring about the origin of island songs will repeatedly be told, "I learned that one from old Captain Rody, and how he would sing it!" I unfortunately arrived on the Island too late to hear him, but the memory of his singing is still very vivid among many of those with whom I talked. He was a big muscular man weighing around 250 pounds, and he had a big powerful bass voice. He acted out his songs, and seemingly had an unending supply of them. He owned and sailed several "lumber hookers" on Lake Michigan during the late 1800's. Several men who did their first sailing with him told of his leaving them aboard to watch ship while the lumber was being unloaded in Chicago while he spent the time in sailor hangout saloons or "free-and-easy shows," where there was much singing; and at his trick at the wheel on their way back down the Lake—he always stood the captain's watch himself—he would start humming and singing bits of the songs he heard, and "soon he'd be singin' 'em all." His son, Frank, or "Francie" as he is called in the Island, who sang many old songs himself, said of his father, "He never had to buy no drinks himself." He was referring to the custom in shore saloons which catered to sailors of giving free drinks to anyone who would sing a song or provide some other form of entertainment. Francie added that his father, "Never had no schoolin' at all, but he could sing any god-damn song that ever was," and other Islanders agreed with him.

Tall, stately, white-haired, tenor-voiced, and genial Dominick Gallagher, a retired lighthouse keeper, who himself recorded a score or more songs, paid high tribute to his Ireland born father, who, he said, sang old songs at parties all over the Island almost to the day he died. "With a few drinks he'd sing all night." He seems to be the one who brought a good share of the current Irish songs to the Island.

Unassuming, diminutive, sailor, farmer, and Island fiddler, Pat Bonnar has not only supplied the music for Island dances for the last several decades on his "Stradivarius" violin—a faded label on the inside proves it—but he also composed and sang at least one song, "The *Clifton's* Crew." He is, no doubt, a better fiddler than poet, but he sang and dictated more than a dozen old songs.

And how can one describe "Johnnie" Green!—sailor, lumberjack,

farmer, and singer par excellence. His father, several uncles, and grandfather were all good singers. In his middle seventies when I last saw him, his former rich, baritone voice had become badly cracked; and his health and memory had deteriorated, probably as a result of the unusually rugged life he had lived, but he dictated and recorded several score of songs and fragments. In answer to a question of how many songs he knew he replied in an entirely off-hand manner, "Probably about a hundred." Recordings made by him and mention of titles, lines, and subjects of others that came from him continually, and a list of titles of his songs compiled by his daughter over a several-months period gave pretty good evidence that he knew or had known probably many more than twice that number. He knew practically all the songs recorded or dictated by others on the Island, and he recognized a good share of a long list of others mentioned to him. He stated somewhat apologetically, in answer to a question about how he learned songs, that frequently he had to hear a song twice and sometimes three times before he could sing it himself. It is most unfortunate that some collector did not come across him twenty years earlier. He probably could have sung a much larger proportion of the Island's extensive folk songs than is available now.

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Aspects of European Influence in West Greenlandic Poetry

By Svend Frederiksen

This treatment of the early European influences on profane Greenlandic poetry and of the interchange between European and Eskimo elements of thought and action does not adhere strictly to chronological order. It leaves almost untouched the Greenlandic poetry of our century. The reader should remember throughout this study that civilization has come to Greenland very gradually. Although most of the regions of West Greenland have been under European influence for quite some time, yet in other areas of the country contact with civilization has been slight. The order of presentation is therefore to some extent independent of time and place. Rather, it is based on the importance of events and furthering elements in relation to the building of a Greenlandic poetry.

The specific type of heathen original Eskimo poem which could be designated as the ballad is that which is frequently combined with the dance. These poems often have an erotic-sexual appearance but have not adopted the form of the newer European love songs. These latter appear at times more abstract than the pagan or the Christian Eskimo would like or appreciate. Besides, sublimated love songs, as well as war songs, are generally lacking in the heathen Eskimo "ballad-poetry."

In some of the primitive poetry from the southernmost regions of South Greenland may be found the attempts at a love poetry in the European sense. They have been published by Thalbitzer and classified by him as the poetry of the time of transition.[1] They must, therefore, be considered as influenced by Europe and, in particular, by Germany. These songs were recorded in 1914, not long after the abandonment of the German Moravian missions in Greenland (1900). The songs originate from the field of work of these missionaries in the beautiful Greelandic fjords. Thalbitzer writes about one of the songs, "The Refused Bride," "It is probable that the unknown author belongs to Moravians of former ages in South Greenland, and that he had in mind to imitate old Greenland style. The song is interesting,

[1] William Thalbitzer, *Inuit Sange og Danse fra Grönland,* [*Inuit Songs and Dances from Greenland*] (København, 1939), pp. 40-43, and *Meddelelser om Grönland* (København, 1923), Vol. XL, pp. 506-510.

however, as a spontaneous outburst of modern Greenlandic composition, perhaps one of the oldest products of this new kind." [2]

The song is composed of two parts. The first section appears to be the most under European influence. It describes the daughter-in-law:

> His refused bride, how charming she was!
> His refused bride, how prettily she wore her hair-tuft!
> His refused bride, how clever she was at sewing!
> His refused bride, what beautiful manner she had![3]

All this lovely behaving is remote from the original Eskimo way of thinking. For the pagan Eskimo it was rather the maintenance of life and its further development (the sexual life and breeding) which was essential and desirable. The sublimated and cultural features of the individual were unimportant.

The second part of the poem is the most Eskimo in its expression. It tells of the departure of the unhappy lover and of how he becomes a *qivítoq*, a hermit:

> From there I travelled away in deep anger with troubled mind
> For never more to wish to see her coast.
> I went up onto the mountain to look into Big Fiord,
> An *umiak* with women just came rowing in.
> From there it occurred to me to ask them to land and pitch tent,
> How curious if they should land and camp here below me!
> From there I approached them, whistling (a signal) in my hands.
> From there I approached them, uttering fox-cries in my hands.
> I distinctly saw my three cousins who attended in the boat.
> They who were accustomed to rub and mend my boots.
> From there I travelled away with troubled mind,
> For never more to wish to see her coasts.[4]

This pecular tendency of single individuals to segregate themselves from the community is known in the lore of other lands, but it may be debated that the phenomenon is one which belongs to the Eskimos. The problem is worth scrutinizing.

The original tales do not flatly recognize the *qivítoq*. Fifth Thule Expedition's report shows, however, that the *qivítoq* existence is known in Canada. Further, the comparative dictionary of D. Jenness shows that the words in the above-mentioned shape (substantive) stands as a verb in the indicative in Alaska (Wales and Barrow) where it means *abashed, ashamed*.[5] When an Eskimo is overwhelmed by humiliation, it strikes him especially hard. One knows this from

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[2] Ibid, p. 506.

[3] Ibid., pp. 506-507.

[4] Ibid., p. 507.

[5] D. Jenness, *Comparative Vocabulary of the Western Eskimo Dialects* (Ottawa, 1928), p. 69.

the drum dances and from the song contests. The abashed person goes far from the battlefield of defeat; he dares not face his people.

A stylistic difference marks the dissimilarity between the sections. The first part of the song uses the third person, while the second section employs the first person.

Thalbitzer thinks that the *aj·a* sound is not typical in the song. He estimates a long *j* as comparatively uncommon in the original Eskimo tongue. Concerning the musical elements of the song, he comments: "The melody is simple and touching, like the music we know from East Greenland, but does not give a convincing effect of its genuineness."[6]

Thus we have a clear evidence of the coherent character of the song. It is unmistakably a mixture of the old and new.

The elegiac character of the song corresponds well with the tragic content of the poem. The entire atmosphere in word and tune is that of a romance.

The other hermit songs in *Meddelelser om Grönland autdlarqârama Tasermiunut* and *nueriatdlariga Ikigait* are called songs of the period of transition by Thalbitzer. The words about the coffee in *autdlarqârama Tasermiunut* do not belong to the pagan Eskimo epoche.[7] Still, there is something in the song *nueriatdlariga Ikigait,* which in lyric and music reminds us of the genuine Eskimo culture. The influence of the German Unitas Fratrum (Moravian) missionaries has not been strong enough to eliminate *sermip iniwa,* the spirit of the ice cap, and there is much in the melody which resembles the genuine Eskimo tune.

It may be proved that all the South-Greenlandic romances of unknown authors have a stamp of Europeanism and that this influence cannot originate from any other source than from the German Moravian Mission. Then, too, it can be stated that mental alterations or shifts have taken place. However, the Eskimo element in the songs is so strong that it cannot be denied that their shape, style and constructive details have not as a whole come from Germany. Thus it is the last vestiges of the old Eskimo art of poetry over which the winds from the south have blown.

Of another character is the nursery rhyme, which Thalbitzer has recorded and presents in *Meddelelser om Grönland.*[8] One story, a fragment of the legend about the moving of the island of Disco, relates how two Greenlanders pulled different ropes attached to Disco (The Greenlandic name is *Qeqertarssuaq,* "the big island." The island is

[6] Thalbitzer, op. cit., p. 506.
[7] Ibid., p. 510.
[8] Ibid., p. 527.

somewhat bigger than the Danish island of Zeeland. The rope, made of human hair, was strong enough that Disco was separated from Greenland and carried out to the sea. The late Professor Olrik was of the opinion that this legend was connected with the myth of the creation of Zeeland (the Gefion myth). But this could be doubted.

Paul Egede records a variation of the Greenlandic legend. An *angákoq* (shaman) told him to kiss the earth of Disco when he stepped upon it. Doing so would pay reverence to the magic moving of the island. Kissing the earth is a habit unfamiliar to Greenlandic Eskimos.

The thought that the hair in itself has an unbreakable supernatural strength is known by many non-Eskimo people. It is found widely in European folklore. Thus there are various things concerning the Greenlandic legend and song which indicate that European influence has played its role; perhaps the roots must be searched for in the medieval Norse history of Greenland.

Thalbitzer tells about "baleare" dancing and song in a footnote in *Meddelelser om Grönland:* "cf. the Spanish and Italian *bailar balear* (earlier form closely agreeing with the Danish Greenlandic *baleare*); old Spanish *ballar;* Portuguese *balhar,* derived from *balla,* 'a globe, a ball.' Ball-tossing in the Middle Ages as among the Greeks was a game combined with song and dance. From thence the Romance form *ballare* 'to dance'." [9] During the first Danish colonization, Hans Egede described the dance as a ring dance. It seems certain that the dance originated in Europe. Thalbitzer writes: "I am referring to a special West Greenland ring or chain dance combining the drum dance of the Eskimo with the ring dance of the Middle Ages, such as we know it in its latest form, the dance which in Northern Europe accompanied folksongs and is still to be seen on the Faeroe Islands." [10] However, Thalbitzer has [11] recorded children's songs which, when sung during play, clearly indicate the connection between the song and dance of the adults. Furthermore, there are expressions which illustrate this close connection. The word *is·ita·ja* in one of these songs refers to the Greenlandic word *isitaia·rtut* 'they who sing: let us wriggle the rump!' " [12] In 1901, Thalbitzer witnessed the above-mentioned *baleare* performance.

The mentioned poems have not adopted the conventional firm European meter. It is peculiar to the whole of the poetry treated

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[9] Ibid., pp. 524-525.

[10] Ibid., p. 525.

[11] William Thalbitzer, *Meddelelser om Grönland* (Köbenhavn, 1904), Vol. XXXI, pp. 315-316.

[12] Thalbitzer, Vol. XL, op. cit., p. 525.

here that a word or part of a word (in Eskimo a word often is a sentence) is repeated from "line of verse to line of verse." This is an important criterion for the technique of the heathen Eskimo poems. Considered in this light, it is impossible to see any influence from European poetry.

Although hymns and hymnbooks in Greenlandic have been issued in numerous editions since the beginning of the Danish colonization and, with relatively short intervals between volumes, up to the present day, it was quite some time before profane poetry was published. A panegyric poem, to which Hans Egede was probably the proper father but to which he must have been ashamed to give his name, is published in his book, *Det gamle Grönlands Nye Perlustration* (Copenhagen, 1741), pp. 86-92.

About 1815, in Breslau, an ode in Eskimo was printed. It was written by Jaspar Brodersen honoring the Emperors Franz and Alexander and the King, Friedrich Wilhelm, not forgetting the "Albion" (England).

The clergyman Knud Kjer had the honor of first publishing a collection of profane poems (hymns were printed early in the period of colonization). This collection in Greenlandic Eskimo, *Illerkorsutit,* was published in 1832 in Aarhus, a city in Denmark. The preface is dated 1831. Knud Kjer was a pastor in Holstensborg (in Greenlandic: Amerdloq or Sisimiut), Greenland, from 1823 to 1831. It was during this period that the poems (with the exception of one) were written. The preface, as well as data given in the book indicates that it was printed at the official expense of the committee of directors of the Board of Greenland. Several of the poems (which he was encouraged to publish) are remembered and still sung in Greenland today, although the edition has not been reprinted and none of the six editions of the Greenlandic songbook *erinarssûtit* has reprinted anything but the romance *avánga tkîkugkit Ikamiut.* It is likely that some of the poems would not fit into the understanding of modern Greenlanders, but it is hard to see any reason for expelling or denying others of the poems the opportunities of publication. However, we will see later that the collection may have been forgotten by modern editors.

It is noticeable that Knud Kjer has named his collection of poetry *Illerkorsutit: ilerqorsût* is the type of poem which is most closely associated with the epic-lyric, *ilerqorssorpoq* means "he sings a song (ballad)." Samuel Kleinschmidt writes in his dictionary that the word has come from the north, and that "In earlier time iliortarpoq is said to be in use in the same meaning, thus about singing a 'Balliere-Song'." Today any song used in connection with the dance is an *ilerqorssût.*

But it is not worthwhile to put too much stock in Kjer's use of the word *ilerquorssût* with regard to his collection of poems. This good missionary's use of terms for the various songs or types of poetry may appear curious, although it is explained in the difficulty of finding equivalent designations for European expressions. Still, their interpretations do not go entirely astray. Although the songs of Kjer hardly have been used as dance music, one observes that the sentiment of the baleare-songs has something in common with his songs.

His *Illerkorsutit* is rather different from the original and genuine Eskimo poetry which one finds in *ivngerutit*. There is nothing of the special Eskimo song-technique (e.g. the *aja-ja* repetitions), and the content is deeply influenced by European, especially Danish, culture and ways of thinking. Often, even the milieu is completely taken from th Old World; this is, of course, the case with the songs, which are mere translations. In the first printed profane collection of poems in the Eskimo language, it is the European, and particularly the Danish, aspects which are in the foreground, although Kjer has by no means intended to subdue what is Eskimo. But there is evidently an attitude which endeavors to create or introduce a Greenlandic national feeling. This attitude becomes of great importance in the poetry of the Greenlanders of our century.

Presumably it is these national elements which play an important part in the romance. Kjer has not been uninfluenced by the national worship of European romanticism. He has the honor of being the first person to lead Greenlandic readers to the spiritual and intellectual current which ran through the literature of Europe during his time. But the Greenlanders of his day did not quite understand this epoch which was being introduced from the outside. For the Eskimo, the national past is of interest only insofar as it concerns his own tribe or village. The legends often manifest that. Different villages claim that they can show the tomb of Kagssagssuk, the legendary hero.

Further, there existed for the Eskimo no other world than his own. There were no other bases of comparison before him. In China the national feeling first awakened when the Chinese wall burst, when young Chinese students began to study and mingle with books and students in the universities of Europe and America; then a basis of comparison was established. It is not strange that the national feeling has come so late after Kjer's (and, somewhat later, Spindler's) poetry in the Greenlanders' own literature. It has only been in the Greenland of our century that the national feeling has begun to find such expression in the words of Greenlandic (native) authors.

In the modern Greenlandic songbook, *erinarssûtit,* a long-stand-

ing error in an author's name has been reprinted. Thus in the two latest issues in Godthaab (1934 and 1946, the sixth issue) the romance of Knud Kjer, *avánga tikîkugkit Ikamiut,* is shown as being written by his son, Jacob Kjer (who will be known in Denmark as the pastor in Herman Bang's novel *Stille Existencer, (Quiet Beings).* That it is written not by him but by his father is fully evidenced by the fact that it is printed in Knud Kjer's collection of poems *Illerkorsutit* (published in Aarhus in 1832). Jacob Kjer was born in 1825 in Holstensborg (where he later became a missionary like his father) and could not, therefore, have been the author of the poem. The reason could therefore be that Knud Kjer's collection is not well enough known in modern Greenland.

The poem itself tells of the fatal love of a young wife for her husband:

When you arrive at Ikamiut from the north,
A tall mountain will be visible;
Its middle part is uneven and steeply ascending,
It is known for its towering rocks.
In ancient times, a young woman, the loveliest of all the maidens
Fell from its highest peak;
The mountain is still red.

Although the mountain was populated densely
With folk from Kangamiut and Manitsoq
She was still by far the loveliest of all her people,
For she was Parnuna
The daughter of Mangangiussaq
Ordlina pilmassoq's bride.
Who spent her winters in the mountain village.

Ordlina had been kajaking for a long time
And did not return home at the expected hour;
Parnuna watched anxiously
From the height of the little headland;
The new moon did not appear in the sky,
The weather was dim, and in the coming evening
The clouds shadowed the sound.

Weeping, she listened for him,
And, weeping, she finally lay down to rest;
When the sun climbed high in the East, she resumed her vigilance,
Half-waking, half-asleep;
Convinced that Ordlina had perished in his kaiak,
She wept incessantly for her husband,
And at length she climbed the mountain and watched weeping.

Watching, she glimpsed his kaiak drifting in the current,
She became aware of his body floating with the stream;
She called out to Ordlina for the last time;
Suddenly she became dizzy, Parnuna
Fell and was crushed.
The mountain peak is still stained by her blood
And it is forever red.[13]

This motif is not Eskimo. One may become involved over a woman; but the "pure" love is never responsible for death among the pagan Eskimos.

In the age of the romance in Europe, it is not uncommon to meet this fatal love motif. In the German romance one finds it (e.g., in Bürger's *Lenore*). The Danish poet Schack von Staffeldt has a romance which reminds the reader of Kjer's. But it is hardly that which has inspired Kjer. Staffeldt pictures the young woman darting down from the wall of the castle just as the open coffin of her beloved is carried by; and he describes her falling down into it by his side! It is the horror-romance in the Bürger style. Fortunately, it has not reached Greenland. The romance of Kjer stands on a higher, more esthetic level. It seems more congenial with the poem of Aarestrup (another Danish poet) *Tidlig Skilsmisse* (*Early Parting*). In this poem, "The young lady, lovely—beauteous as a Bajadere" received the message of the violent death of her beloved; "she fainted, fell as crushed, you do not find any marble more charming stretched in the gravel." It is presumably written in a time when it might have influenced Kjer. It is certain that the motif, carried out with the sublimated and beautiful sentiment of the Greenlandic romance (the fatal love), was known in Denmark and the rest of civilized Europe at that time. Aarestrup is regarded as the master of the erotic golden age of Danish poetry.

It becomes increasingly difficult to state whether Kjer in his artistic picturing of love has drawn from a specific European poem. It seems impossible to point out resemblances in the text itself with that of European literature. The threads are interlaced, and they are not easily unravelled. The poem has an Eskimo aspect which however could be separated from the European parts.

Kjer's poem claims to deal with an event in the Eskimo past. It has a legendary patina. If a poem such as this were traced back to an Eskimo source, whence it was transformed and further treated, then it seems likely that its "raw material" might have been the following legend recorded by Glahn. In modern translation, it reads:

Above Assung-Assung-a! you come to a place by name

[13] Erinarssutit (Nungme, 1946), p. 20. [Accent marks omitted.]

> Nakarbik. The word means a place, where you tumble down. About the origin of this name, you have the following legend [:tradition:]. Two young persons, of each sex, had come up above the rock. Here the young man began to caress the girl pulling her arms [:Paniarpa:], but the girl ran away from him. They continued this amusement as long till the girl by accident tumbled down the mountain and was killed on the underlying primeval stones. The young man hot-headed in persecuting her, was not aware of her falling, but ran to the same place as she and ended life in the same manner. It is probable that these two young persons have been of noble birth, since this sad happening is conserved unto an eternal memory.[14]

The last passage, concerning nobility, must stem from Glahn's own fancy. The Eskimo people ordinarily know nothing of noble descent. Glahn was as Kjer a missionary in Holstensborg. He served there from 1763 till 1769. Both pastors must have known well the conditions and history of the community. We can conclude that the names of the persons are genuine Eskimo. Ordlína is thus mentioned by Glahn as a name of an *angákoq*.[15] Finally, it can be pointed out that many pagan Eskimo names terminate with *-na*.

It has been previously established that the heathen Eskimo did not know love poetry in the European sublimated sense. Love without the erotic notions did not ordinarily play a role in his poetry. It is quite peculiar that also the modern Greenlander, on the whole, does not pay much attention to the sublimated love poetry.

In the sixth edition of the song-book *Erinarssutit* (1946), which contains 236 poems, there is, beside Kjer's romance, one poem which deals with love between young persons (having another theme). That is the late catechist Hans Motzfeldt's poem *asangarpinga? - asangarpavkit (Do you love me much? I love you much.)* It is evidently inspired from a poem by the great Norwegian author Björnstjerne Björnson. However, it shows that Kjer's romance motif in *avánga tikíkugkit Ikamiut* has not passed further in Greenlandic poetry.

In Kjer's collection of poetry, there is another romance which clearly has put its traces in the Greenlanders' more recent poetry. It is the song *Tamanga ungesikpok - Illergveen ernera!* which was composed August 26, 1831, commemorating the day of the death of his son, Hans. Kjer was on board a ship bound for Denmark when he wrote the poem. He tells that the tomb of his son is far away from

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[14] H. C. Glahn, *Dagböger, Det grönlandske Selskabs Skrifter* (København, 1921), IV, pp. 113-114 (edited by H. Ostermann).

[15] Ibid., p. 78, Ortlena.

him, but the memory of him is still living in his soul. He wishes that he may meet him in the hereafter.

Quite evidently the Greenlandic woman Elisa Motzfeldt-Böggild's poem *tamanga ungasigpoq - nuna asassara* was influenced by Kjer. But here the object of the longing is the native country, the beloved homeland from which she was absent for many years. The unextinguishable longing for the homestead is old and typical of the Greenlanders' feeling. Greenlanders who in the seventeenth century were carried to Denmark tried to escape back to Greenland. This love of the homestead which the nuna tended has since grown to envelop all of Greenland. One sees it in many of the Greenlandic poems of our time such as the national anthem (by Hendrik Lund, the late poet laureate of Greenland) *nunarput, Our County.* It is the national feeling which is slowly being awakened.

To a certain extent, one may speak of the national feeling as being imported from Europe. The national ideas were pushed up to Greenland by well-meaning national-liberal European civil servants such as the Dane Rink and the German Samuel Kleinschmidt. In the poetry of the Europeans (Kjer and Spindler) of the previous century, there is a spur to the Greenlandic national feeling which has begun to have some effect in our century. Kjer's romance *avánga tikíkugkit Ikamiut* breathes of affection for Greenland and its native population; but he has a poem which, in a special degree, is a national poem for Greenland - "Nunaga" ("My Country") a poem which is missing from erinarssûtit.

On the other hand, it should not be assumed that the national feeling lacks original Greenlandic impulses. It might have been during the first colonization that a Greenlander sang: "I am not the one, who likes sweetened drink, - not the one, who frequents the big houses - not the one, who twitters like the birds ho ho haja hai." The national consciousness here is unmistakable.

It must be noted also that while love poetry is rare, the poems which touch the national heart-strings occupy an extensive space in the Greenlandic poetry of our time about a hundred years after Kjer's poems.

It cannot have been incidental with Motzfeldt-Böggild's interest in the poems of Kjer. She was born in 1857 in Holstensborg, the same place where Kjer had been pastor. In her youth she was adopted by the missionary Böggild who, for some years, was a pastor there and who, in 1877, took her with him to Denmark. She died in 1942 in Copenhagen. *Ajarssuaq,* great aunt, felt like Kjer that she had left something which she loved behind her across the ocean. There is also

the connection between Kjer's *Tamanga ungesikpok (It Is Far Away)* and her own *tamanga* which is found in the periodical *Avangnamioq*.[16]

The prosodic forms (European meter of Kjer's and Motzfeldt-Böggild's) poems show clearly the European coherence. But it was not Kjer who brought the European metric forms to Greenland. They were introduced in the hymns by the Danish-Norwegian and German missionaries who were engaged in the first period of colonization in the eighteenth century.

The first influences of European Romanticism as regards the "pure love" herein described have had no wide-spread effect on the Greenlandic poetry. Indeed, the theme of sublimated love between man and woman has commonly been neglected even by modern national poets. However this Romanticism became important for the development of a national feeling.

The Moravian missionary Carl Julius Spindler (from Germany), who wrote excellent Greenlandic poetry in the latter part of the nineteenth century, contributed further in this aspect.

But, our treatment of the European influence in West Greenlandic poetry pauses before the gateway to the more recent literary epoch.

Georgetown University *Washington, D.C.*

[16] Avangnamioq (Qeqertarssuarme, May 1935 No. 5) p. 33.

Notes, News, and Queries

SOCIETIES. *The American Folklore Society,* in conjunction with the Texas Folklore Society, held its Sixty-Fourth Annual Convention in Magoffin Auditorium of Texas Western College in El Paso, Texas, on Monday and Tuesday, December 22-23. Professors Haldeen Braddy and C. L. Sonnichsen of Texas Western College were joint chairmen of the Committee on Program and Arrangements. Twenty-eight papers were read on various aspects of folklore variously grouped according to the following subject matter: Origins, Methods, Characters and Places, Belles-Lettres, Legends, and Other Types.

The Presidential Address was delivered by the retiring president, Professor Francis Lee Utley of The Ohio State University, who spoke on the subject of "Universal Folklore." The following officers were elected to serve for the coming year: President—William R. Bascom,

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Northwestern University; First Vice-President—Herbert Halpert, Murray State College; Second Vice-President—W. Edson Richmond, Indiana University; Secretary-Treasurer—MacEdward Leach, University of Pennsylvania; Editor—Katharine Luomala, University of Hawaii; Review Editor—Richard M. Dorson, Michigan State College; Executive Committee—Haldeen Braddy, Texas Western College, and Regina Flannery, Catholic University of America.

Southern California Folklore Society. Meeting for its first time since its organization last spring, the Southern California Folklore Society was a guest of the Southwest Museum in Los Angeles at a public meeting on October 11. Frederick Webb Hodge, director of the society and one of its charter members, welcomed the group, and Dean Gustave O. Arlt of the University of California at Los Angeles presided at the meeting. Charles Speroni of UCLA gave a talk on the celebration of Columbus Day by Italians in California, and Vernon R. King of Los Angeles City College lectured on "Indian Folkways According to Columbus." Entertainment was provided by Elizabeth Walso, violinist and performer of Latin-American folk music, accompanied by Dudley C. Gordon, Los Angeles City College, who played some early folk songs made by Charles F. Lummis and spoke informally on Lummis and his early work in folklore.

Pennsylvania Dutch Folk Culture. A week of seminars on the folklore and folk culture of the Pennsylvania Dutch was held at the Bynden Wood Mountain Center at Wernersville, Pennsylvania, August 4-9, 1952. All phases of folklore and the folklore of material culture were discussed by various experts and scholars from the Pennsylvania Dutch country and elsewhere.

Cleveland Folklore Society. Operating in conjunction with the Cleveland Public Library and centering its attention on the folklore of the Western Reserve area, the Cleveland (Ohio) Folklore Society was organized during 1952. Newbell N. Puckett is President and Harry L. Ridenour is Vice-President. Communications should be addressed to Miss Barbara Penyak, Secretary, Music Division, Cleveland Public Library, Cleveland, Ohio.

Illinois Folklore Society. The annual fall meeting of the Illinois Folklore Society was held at Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, Illinois, on December 6, 1952. An afternoon program presented the following items: Scotch and Irish airs played on a two-hundred year old dulcimer by Joseph Rodney of Herrin, Illinois; "The Range of

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Omens and Tokens of West Virginia

By Ruth Ann Musick

A few years ago nobody could have made me believe there was a place in the world so chuck-full of omen and token lore as Northeast Missouri. Of late, however, my unbounded faith in Missouri has been somewhat shaken. I am inclined to think West Virginia may not only have more token-tales but also better ones.

I'm still very loyal to the old Missouri tales my mother, aunt, and grandmother used to tell, but the trouble is, one can't always put his finger on the *exact* token. Sometimes, it seems to be a kind of hand-writing-on-the-wall information. For example, they used to tell of an elderly man who was believed to be on his deathbed. His relatives were more or less expecting him to die any minute, when all of sudden he raised up in bed and said, "I'm not going to die to-night. I'm going to die fifteen years from now." And he died exactly fifteen years from that time—just to the minute!

Now, in most West Virginia token-tales, the tokens are definite objects that behave in most un-object like manners. For example, notice the unmistakability of the token in the following incident contributed by Mrs. Ethel Cunningham.

Unlighted Lantern

Some people were on their way to sit up with a sick neighbor. Half way up a steep hill they stopped to rest and set down the lantern, and it (the lantern) jumped up, turned around three or four times and went out. They re-lighted it, and it did the same thing again, so they went on without it. When they were almost there, a strange creature appeared from over the hill. It looked something like a huge, white dog and crawled away very quickly. When they reached the neighbor's house, she was already dead.

Now here, as I see it, there is no mistaking the token. As everyone knows lanterns sometimes will not stay lit in a strong wind, but none I've ever seen made even the least move to jump up and turn around three or four times on its own power. Just what the huge, dog-like creature had to do with it, I'm by no means sure; nor am I sure about the relation, if any, between the dog and the lantern. Nevertheless, I think the whole thing is an extremely interesting token-tale.

Another rather unusual token-story, that seems to have no Missouri variant that I have heard, is the case of the striking clock, contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott of Smithfield, West Virginia.

THE CLOCK STRIKES

A neighbor woman was very sick. For weeks she had lingered in death. Two young girls were sitting up with her one night, fanning her, adjusting her pillows, and trying to make her comfortable. The old weight clock which stood on the mantel and had not run for years started striking. The girls stared at each other, but both counted eleven strokes. Both girls were badly frightened, but both stuck it out until morning. The woman died at exactly eleven o'clock the next morning.

The fluttering of a bird at a window is supposed to be an ill omen everywhere, I believe—generally forecasting death. I have several examples of bird-tokens, but will give only one, also contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott.

THE BIRD AT THE WINDOW

An old lady was sick and a neighbor came in to spend the evening. While they were reading the Bible, praying and singing hymns, a little bird came and fluttered at the window at the head of the sick woman's bed. The neighbor woman said it was a bad omen and that the sick woman would not live long. She died at five the next morning.

FOOTSTEPS AND OPENING GATE
(Contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott)

A woman was sick and her granddaughters were sitting up with her, one ironing and the other at her bedside. The one at the bedside heard someone open the gate, walk up the flagstone walk, across the porch, and back to the living room door. She ran to the living room and told her cousin someone was at the door. They went to the door together, but no one was there. Together, they went back to the old woman's bedside. Soon they heard the same thing again. Again they went to the door and out on the porch, but no one was there. In fact, they went clear around the house and out to the gate, but saw no one. That morning, a little later, the grandmother died.

VISION OF SICK MAN IN FIELD

(Contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott, who heard the tale from her mother, who in turn, heard it from her grandfather and uncle, the two men who had hoed in the cornfield.)

A man and his son went over to hoe out a neighbor's corn field. The neighbor was down sick with typhoid fever. He was burning up and begged for a drink of water from the spring up in the cornfield.

In those times not one drop of water was given a typhoid patient for fear of killing him.

It was a hot day and the two men stopped their hoeing as they passed by the spring, got a drink, and sat down in the shade to rest a few minutes. Suddenly the son said, "Look, there comes Ef in his shirt-tail."

Ef came on to the spring, lay down on his stomach and drank for a long time, then vanished. Both men stared. Finally the father said, "Ef will not get well. That was a token of his death."

They hoed on until evening. When they had finished and come off the hill, they found that Ef had died about the middle of the afternoon, just when they saw him drink.

SMALL CASKET

(Contributed by Mrs. Margaret Reppard of Smithfield.)

A little girl had been very ill but was convalescing in the home of her grandmother. The family were no longer worried about her condition. One evening just as darkness was coming on, the mother was walking from her home to the home of her mother-in-law, where the child was. Suddenly in the path directly in front of her appeared a small casket, which then floated away over the hill. She hurried to the house and found her little daughter was dying.

THREE WOMEN IN WHITE

(Contributed by Mrs. Ethel Cunningham of near Smithfield, West Virginia.)

When Jim Coen was sick, his wife sent for my aunt and uncle to come and stay with him for the afternoon and evening. They took the buggy and started. They stopped at one of the neighbors below, and they said they'd go too, so Aunt Hannah went back to the barn for her riding horse, and the rest went in the buggy. It was after dark when they got started back, and when they got into one of the bad turns, the buggy wheel slid over the bank and caught on a stump. They got out and started to try to get the wheel loose, when they noticed three women in white, standing below the buggy. They stood and watched and the women disappeared. They finally got out and started home. When they came to the hollow, Aunt Hannah said something hit her horse, and when she looked back, there was something sitting behind her, riding. She said the horse passed the buggy and didn't quit running until they got home.

WALKING MUSIC BOX

(Contributed by Mrs. Ethel Cunningham)

Some friends were telling me about John Hostuttler being sick and they were going on the ridge to see him. They were almost there

when they saw something that looked like a brass kettle, turned upside down. The man kicked it, and it was a music box. It started walking down over the hill, playing, and went out of sight. Three days afterwards John died.

HORSELESS WAGON (In Pioneer Days)
(Contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott)

When my great grandfather and great grandmother were first married, they lived on Sandy's Run out from Worthington on the West Fork River. One of their neighbors was sick with consumption, as they then called it. He got very low, so they went over to sit up with him and help out in whatever way they could. Just after midnight they heard a wagon coming down the run. The creek bed was used for a road. They wondered who it was and both walked to the door and looked out. By the bright harvest moonlight they could plainly see the wagon. It came on and rattled out of sight and hearing, but to their surprise, no horses were hitched to it. They clung to one another in fear and surprise.

During the night the neighbor died. They hauled him away in a wagon. Grandmother says this was a token of his death.

HEARING FUNERAL AS TOKEN
(Contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott)

My grandfather died in June. My mother was making strawberry jam. We children were playing under the kitchen window. My brother was building a miniature oil derrick. He stopped playing and called, "Mother, who's dead?"

She answered, "No one, Paul."

He called back, "Yes, there is. I hear them singing, and the dirt dropping on the rough box at the cemetery."

My mother came out, walked to the side yard, and looked up toward the church cemetery, which was in sight of our house. She saw nor heard nothing. But Paul kept saying, "Hear them, Mother. Now they are singing 'In the Sweet By and By'."

In a little while my grandfather's hired man came with his horse on a dead run. My grandfather had taken very bad sick with a pain in his head and was unconscious. Grandmother wanted my father to call a doctor and come quickly. Dad did not even take time to change clothes but went immediately. But Grandfather was dead when he got there.

CAPTAIN FRANK COPENHAVER'S GHOST
(Contributed by Mrs. Gypsy Scott)

During the Civil War, Captain Frank Copenhaver of my community was killed and buried in Arlington Cemetery.

Their (the Copenhaver's) home was a two-room log cabin with double chimneys in each room for a big fireplace. In one room the family lived and slept. In the other they cooked and ate and kept their food supplies. To lock the door they pulled in the latch string.

This unusually cold night they had a big, bright fire. Mrs. Copenhaver put her children to bed, sat and sewed while her fire burned down, then retired herself. Due to being alone, she always made sure her latch strings were pulled in herself.

This night she checked them as usual before going to bed. As she lay there watching the fire she heard footsteps come to the door; the latch was lifted the same as if the string had been out, and in walked her husband. He was dressed in his army uniform, but it was spattered with blood. He walked to the fire and poked it up. His wife sprang from her bed and screamed, "Frank, you have come home!" This awoke the children, but their father was not there. The door was open and the poker lay on the floor where it dropped when he vanished. Mrs. Copenhaver declared that was a token of something being wrong with her husband.

After the close of the war, a neighbor, Wid Price, returned. He told of how the two armies were camped so close that they could see one another's camp fires, which they kept burning all night long because of the severe cold. He also told of scouting parties slipping in from the enemy camps during the night and always someone was killed. During one of these nights, their captain was killed, Captain Frank Copenhaver.

Mrs. Copenhaver declared she was warned by this ghost of his death.

I have pages more of these token-tales, at least five times as many more as these given here—not to mention, I don't know how many pages of dream-warnings—but this is enough to give a fairly good sample of such West Virginia lore. The contributors mentioned above are all former students of Fairmont State College—all students in my first evening school class of thirty-five in Folk Literature. All live or did live in (or near) Smithfield, West Virginia.

Fairmont State College *Fairmont, West Virginia*

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Folklore in the Works of James Fenimore Cooper," by Dr. Warren S. Walker, Blackburn College; and "Proverbs and Weather Lore," by Dr. W. Edson Richmond, Indiana University. During the brief business meeting which followed the following officers were elected: President—William E. Simeone; Vice-President—Miss May Dorsey; Secretary-Treasurer—Mrs. Myrtle Harris; Editor—Jesse W. Harris; Board Member—Mrs. Katherine Q. Griffith. After adjournment, members and friends of the Society enjoyed a tea at the home of Professor and Mrs. David S. McIntosh.

Kentucky Folklore Society. The annual fall meeting of the Kentucky Folklore Society was cancelled so as to make way for the meeting to be held in conjunction with the American Folklore Society and the Mississippi Valley Historical Society on May 8-9 in Lexington, Kentucky. The present plans call for a joint AFS-MVHA-KFS meeting on Friday afternoon, AFS-KFS meetings Friday morning or evening, and AFS-KFS meetings devoted entirely to Kentucky folklore on Saturday morning.

In addition, the Kentucky Folklore Society will hold its usual spring meeting in Louisville on April 17. At that meeting, Professor Tristram P. Coffin of Denison University and author of *The British Traditional Ballads in America* will be the speaker.

The International Folk Music Council is holding its Second International Festival of Folk Dance and Song together with its Sixth Annual Conference in the Basque country at Biarritz, France, and Pamplona, Spain, from July 9th to 15th, 1953, at the invitation of the Syndicat d'Initiatives and town of Biarritz, and of the municipality of Pamplona. Countries in all parts of the world are being invited to send representative groups of dancers and singers. Only authentic folk music will be performed and as far as possible it will be executed by traditional dancers and singers.

There will be three Conference sessions, and short communications on the following subjects are invited: (1) Ritual and ceremonial dances and songs; (2) Folk music (dance and song) in education; and (3) the distinction between "folk" and "popular." Those who wish to offer papers should forward to the Honorary Secretary, to be received not later than April 1st, the title of the paper, a short summary of its contents, and particulars of the illustrations it is proposed to use. The official languages of the Conference will be French and English. For further information apply to: Miss Maud Karpeles, Honorary Secretary, International Folk Music Council, 12 Clorane Gardens, London, N.W. 3, England.

Book Reviews

Studies in Yiddish Folklore. Y. L. Cahan. Edited by Max Weinrich (New York: Yiddish Scientific Institute—YIVO, 1952). 374 pp.

Y. L. Cahan (1881-1937) devoted some forty years of his life to the study of Jewish folklore and was one of the outstanding scholars in this field. Born in Vilna, he began collecting Yiddish folksongs and folktales as early as 1896, and continued it in his different living places—Warsaw, London, and, since 1904, New York. Simultaneously, he studied the fundamental theoretical folklore problems in their Jewish aspects: The interdependence of Jewish and general folklore; the age of Jewish folktales and folksongs, etc., and many of his papers were published in Yiddish scientific magazines.

Unfortunately for the general folklore-science, all Cahan's important contributions (bedside papers—two volumes of "Yiddish Folksongs," 1912-1920, with a scholarly 60-page introduction; a second collection of Jewish folksongs in 1927; a book of Jewish folktales, 1931-1940), were published in Yiddish, and though highly praised by such prominent scholars as Professor Walter Anderson (cf. his review, YIVO-BL.1932, pp. 421-424), they never reached the general scholar and reader.

At the time of his early death, Cahan was preparing an enlarged and revised edition of his folksong collections, and as a tribute to his memory, the Yiddish Scientific Institute (YIVO) undertook to complete the project on a broader scale and to edit his complete works in six volumes (1-3—folksongs; 4—folktales; 5—notes to 1-4; 6—theoretical writings). At the outbreak of World War II, the editorial work was in full swing.

Under Nazi occupation, the YIVO European center in Vilma was destroyed, most of its staff-members and editors killed, and most of its collections lost. However, the material intended for the last volume (theoretical writings) was in New York, and thus did not perish with the rest of the prepared manuscripts. With the help of the New York YIVO and its scientific director Dr. Max Weinrich, it has been issued now, fifteen years after the author's death.

It is regrettable that no English summary has been appended to the book for the use of scholars unfamiliar with its Yiddish language. Only the translated "Table of Contents" gives the general reader an idea how rich and wide are the topics covered. Here follow some of the chapters' headings: Popular Songs Versus Folksongs, How Old are our Love Songs?, On the Origin of the Yiddish Dance Song, Folk-

song Versus "Folksy" Song, On Folksongs of Literary Origin, A Popular Song and Yet No Folksong, Folkstudy-Folkloristics-Ethnography, On Yiddish Folktales, Parallels to Yiddish Folktales, On Jewish Jokes, Parallels to Jewish Customs and Magic Cures, etc. Most of the material left behind by the author was never published before.

What are the author's most important conclusions?

Definition of Jewish Folksong. The author is particularly anxious to draw the line of demarcation between the folksong and the popular song. The folksong is the collective and cumulative creation of the entire people, barring the innermost recesses of its soul. Its hallmarks are: 1) anonymous authorship, 2) oral transmission from generation to generation and region to region, 3) inseparableness of words and melody, 4) wide prevalence among the people. The folksong does not operate with abstract ideas, but with concrete experiences. In contrast to the individualistic-artistic poem it is natural, naive and artless. The subjects are not religious, moralizing, or holiday songs. Since it is inseparably linked with a given melody, its stanzas must be uniform, and, on the other hand, because of its popularity it occurs in many variants.

The Origins of the Yiddish Folksong. The author rejects the "reproduction" theory of the folksong, which states that the people are incapable of creating a folksong and are merely the recipients of an artistic creation, which they reduce to scale in consonance with their conception of life and with their taste. On the contrary, the author points out that many a popular song of known authorship has passed through the crucible of folk creativity and has become a folksong. In addition to this literary origin the author lists two other origins of Yiddish folksong: the non-Jewish folklore and the collective creative activity of the Jewish people. The general theme of the folksong is universal, but its particular expression—national. Contrary to the widespread conception the author thinks that the Jewish folksong reflects rather the Germanic than the Slavic folklore.

How Old is the Yiddish Love Song? The author opposes the theory that the Yiddish love-song, because of the peculiar conditions of Jewish life in Eastern Europe, was a product of the second half of the 19th century and arose under Slavic influence. That theory, the author says, proceeded on the erroneous assumption that Jewish society in former generations consisted solely of a middle class of petty tradesmen, to which certain conditions of life were broadly applicable. There existed, however, lower classes, which consisted of artisans,

apprentices, maids, etc., to whom those conditions did not generally apply. They did not marry at an early age like the middle class, and sometimes they had to postpone marriage until they were in their twenties—a rather late age in those years, and so forth; the yearnings of these "young adults" found expression in song and dance. The author traces the beginning of the Yiddish love-song to the 16th century. Its origin was the dance-song, since the dance was generally accompanied by words. Gradually these simple dance-tunes developed into extensive love lyrics. As there was some shyness about them, they were sung only in certain groups, hence they remained unknown to some students of Jewish folksongs.

Definition of Jewish Folklore. In the course of his studies and research the author evolved his own definition of Jewish folklore. It is both the "knowledge" of the people and the scientific study of this knowledge. The author rejects the view of the Jewish folklorists developed in Soviet Russia during the 1920's, that the Yiddish folksong is merely a class song traveling from the upper to the lower classes and that the Yiddish love-song was a "revolutionizing factor," which rejected the middle class conception of courtship and love. The author opposes also combining folklore with ethnography.

The most interesting and valuable to the student of general folklore are undoubtedly the chapters containing parallels between Jewish and general folklore items. However, it is to be regretted that no attempt has been made by the editor to bring this rich and inspiring material up to date. The editor's piety and respect towards the author ("it goes without saying that no attempt was made to change or amend Cahan's presentation"—p. 372) should not have hindered him from adding ellusive remarks on the recent development in the fields dealt with. This disadvantage is particularly evident in the field of folktale study, which has made enormous progress during the last twenty years. So the author, though making excellent use of the Aarne-Thompson *Type-Index* (the types traced in the Jewish folktales and analyzed are: 123, 151, 315, 360, 506A, 560, 653, 676, 700—"Bebele", the Jewish Tom Thumb, 720, 736, 921, 922, 945, 950, 1159, 1287, 1525D, 1536B, 1562, 1641, 1696, 1697, 1698, 1920B, 1960C), is still unaware of the *Motif-Index,* and additional editorial references to it (E632, H771, H251. 3.4, etc.) or to Thompson's "Folktale" (1948) would considerably improve the relevant pages (254-278).

Let us hope that the carefully issued volume will strike a responsive chord not only as a tribute to a great scholar's memory, his ex-

tensive knowledge and the wide scope of his interests, but also as a stimulus for realizing the original plan of a complete Cahan edition and for further studies in the field of Jewish folklore.

In order not to exclude from it the non-Yiddish scholar and in order to make the general folklorists acquainted with the collected materials and their elaborate analysis, a way must be found if not of bilingual publications, then at least of appending English summaries or even excerpts to useful volumes of the kind reviewed above.

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Midwest Folklore
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